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HOW TO COPE WITH PLURALIZATION?
STUDIES ON MODERN CULTURAL CONFLICTS

InIIS-Arbeitspapier Nr. 6/97
English version

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Introduction

During the past few years there has been a growing debate on cultural conflicts both within societies and in international relations. This *Working Paper* contains mainly translated chapters from a book which was recently published in German elaborating on the issues of cultural conflicts: *Zivilisierung wider Willen. Der Konflikt der Kulturen mit sich selbst*, Frankfurt a.M. 1998 (edition suhrkamp 2081). Earlier versions of these chapters had been published in German as InIIS-Arbeitspapier Nr. 6/97.

The first chapter of this *Working Paper*, however, was not taken from that book, but was published as a contribution to the *Festschrift* in honor of Helmut Schmidt on the occasion of his 80th birthday. It can be read as a summary statement of the political issues inherent in the current debate on cultural conflicts. In a nutshell, the controversial issues behind that debate can be reduced to two conceptual points of reference: pluralization as a threat, and tolerance as a solution. Differently put, how do individual societies cope with the growing pluralization which they experience within themselves as a consequence of modernization processes, and how does the world at large cope with plurality? Will tolerance prevail? And what is the role of "culture" in those conflicts which have recently been referred to as culturally induced?

After exploring these issues within the context of the main non-Western cultural areas there follow some reflections on a constructive form of intercultural dialogue. But that dialogue can only be of some use if it first tackles the deepening intra-cultural conflicts within specific cultural areas.

This *Working Paper* was put together with the object of facilitating the debate on the issues in question.

Bremen in Spring 1999

Dieter Senghaas

I

1. Does the World Sink into Cultural Conflicts?

The Books of the Maccabees contained in the Old Testament tell the story of the Maccabees's struggle against the compulsory Hellenization of Judea. Antiochus, Seleucid ruler, intended to turn the Jerusalem temple into a shrine of the Olympian Zeus and thus prohibiting Jewish law. By desecrating their temple and introducing a new law Jewish religion was to be suppressed. The narrator tells about fighting, but also about collaboration and, above all, about the Judean resistance movement which was religiously inspired and, last not least, about the successful rebellion of the Maccabees led by Judas Maccabeus. Judas Maccabeus versus Antiochus: this is symbolic of a *cultural struggle*.

Will 21th century's world politics slide into cultural conflicts of the caliber of the Old Testament? Those who claim this-as recently Johan Galtung, Samuel Huntington and some who follow them-do not deny that in the future there will still be power struggles and distributive conflicts on the stage of world politics. But real conflict dynamics will arise out of incompatible, culturally formed "cosmologies": from basically different ideas about man, nature and transcendence and especially from contradictory conceptions of the "good society" and a "just international order".¹

In these predictions "civilizations", i.e. the cultural regions that are characterized by Confucianism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam as well as Western and other cultures, are declared to be the basis of political actions, and the core states of such cultural areas are considered to be the main actors of world politics: Accordingly, the "fault lines" between cultures become the true political trouble spots both on the level of world politics and on its micro-level.

I

In the past years this forecast has triggered an intensive dispute all over the world. In view of lacking empirical evidence in support of this thesis, this is amazing since in world politics the external behavior of the main actors continues to follow a logic that discernibly derives more from the system of international relations than from inner cultural impulses: Where power accumulates on the international stage there anti-power is forming up; especially hegemonial endeavors are almost instinctively thwarted by counteracting strategies. If national aims can no longer be realized unilaterally, states try to achieve them by means of multilateral cooperation. In doing so cultural closeness or distance are not of any importance. Where dense economic interconnections become the determining factor for their behavior, these

¹ Samuel P. Huntington: *The Clash of Civilizations*, New York 1996; Johan Galtung: *Die andere Globalisierung*, Münster 1998, ch. IV. My critique on Huntington can be found in Dieter Senghaas: *A Clash of Civilizations - An Idée Fixe?*, in: *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 35, no. 1, 1998, pp. 127-132. A broad-ranging critique on the clash of civilizations-thesis is now available in Harald Müller: *Das Zusammenleben der Kulturen. Ein Gegenentwurf zu Huntington*, Frankfurt a.M. 1998.

are-irrespective of culture-based on comparably high socio-economic levels of development: The "logic of the power state" may then be replaced by that of the "trading state" but not by the "logic of culture".

However, this logic of culture is particularly often referred to when pointing out that according to the Islamic self-image the world is divided in two: the world of Islam/peace and that of the foreign countries/war. By reason of its universalistic claim, Islam would be driven to missionize the exterior world of the infidels. In compliance with this assertion, the behavior of Islamic states towards the community of the faithful, the *umma*, should significantly differ from that towards unbelievers. However, the politics of the Islamic states from Morocco to Indonesia actually follows identical premises in both directions: opportunistic power calculations, economic interests, and only now and then the interest in exporting revolution motivated by domestic political considerations is of relevance.

What is noticeable in the Islamic area becomes apparent in Asia as well. Neither in East Asia nor in Southeast Asia there is any prospect of a common political "Asian platform". Just the opposite: As a result of further modernization thrusts, East and Southeast Asia which are economically successful gradually grow into the OECD-club dominated by the West, and here they are welcome. Besides, in the big world conferences of the nineties it was quite conspicuous that-with the exception of the Vienna Conference on Human Rights-the fault lines were determined by conflicts very different from cultural ones: the gap between North and South; between nuclear states, nuclear threshold countries and non-nuclear countries; states with an extremely high increase in population and those whose increase in population tends to zero; between the highly industrialized states causing a wealth-induced environmental destruction of world climate and the ozon layer and the less developed countries where poverty-induced environmental destruction proceeds. Thus, world politics is still much more characterized by conflict lines which are *not* based on culture than by really existing or only imagined "cosmologies".

II

If cultural regions ("civilizations") cannot be observed as actors on the macro level of world politics, do not cultural fault lines nonetheless determine the conflicts on lower levels? Is the thesis of the "clash of civilizations" of more substance with regard to processes inside states?

At first sight this supposition seems to make sense. In Northern Ireland Protestants and Catholics were fiercely opposed to each other until recently, despite many endeavors for peace; in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict Jews and Muslims bitterly confront each other. In the south of Sudan members of tribal religions and Christians try to keep off the danger of Islamization threatening from the north. In Lebanon heavily armed militias that represent, though not exclusively, religious groups had been fighting each other in a civil war for more than 10 years. Since the mid-eighties Buddhist Singhalese and Hindu Tamils have been at feud with each other in Sri Lanka. In India the escalation of a conflict between Hindu fundamentalists and Muslims could have been observed for many years. Sunni and Shi'i Muslims engage each other in Pakistan. In Algeria, Egypt, Turkey and Afghanistan it is the

Islamists' aim to abolish the secular state. After all: The wars and conflicts in former Yugoslavia are very often interpreted as typical examples of cultural conflicts.

Contrary to this first-sight-evidence, cultural conflicts based on rivaling religious or cultural concepts about the shaping of public order are rather the exception than the rule. At present such a conflict can be observed in Israel. Should Israel remain a state in accordance with secular premises for which liberal Zionists stand, or should, as the Ultraorthodox and National-religious groups demand, a public order embodying "Jewish law" be created? The cultural substance of the conflict within Israel plays quite an important role, far more than in conflicts which today are being discussed as culturally determined ethnic conflicts, mostly referring to the thesis of the "clash of civilizations".

Generally, specific religious and cultural factors are only rarely of significance when conflicts start to escalate. Ethnic conflicts basically originate from socio-economic problems and mainly break out after a long experience of blatant social and economic discrimination. It is especially minorities that suffer from such discrimination, for which reason most ethnic conflicts are minority conflicts. More seldom a majority population-like the Kosova-Albanians in Kosova today-have to defend themselves against the apartheid policy of a dominant minority (in Kosova against the Serbs).

Under contemporary conditions, however, it is almost impossible to refuse minorities some social upward mobility. Usually, minorities also have access to education and, even more important, to mass media. So the better living prospects of the majority population cannot be concealed from them. And if the gap between the expectation of social progress on the one hand and its blockades built into the very structure of society on the other hand are experienced as frustrating, if, furthermore, the life chances thus thwarted are felt as *collective* destiny, then culturalization of politics or politicization of culture is likely. Such development is inevitable if discrimination includes the cultural dimension from the very outset.

The culturalization of conflict within the constellation of thwarted life prospects and collective frustration is not a new reality. So, for instance, in the past century Czech nationalism won its support of the masses when in Bohemia and Moravia more and more Czechs had to realize that notwithstanding their good training decisive positions in administration, universities, lawyers' offices and similar institutions were not open to them. For the same reason, more than 150 years later the new young intelligentsia in occupied East Timor developed their own cultural, i.e. national consciousness although Jakarta, by purposeful training programs, wanted to produce loyal Indonesians and not nationalists-*peine perdue*, as usual in such cases.

In Germany many people were confronted with similar experience till far into the first half of this century: In predominantly Protestant areas it was extraordinarily difficult for Catholics to climb up the social ladder just as for Protestants in Catholic areas. Politicization of cultural differences happens when minorities are denied realizing their economic and social aims. When such conflicts escalate this leads to a defence reaction respectively, in consequence of which a conflict focused on educational opportunities, upward mobility, qualified jobs, as well as status, income and political participation, but not on the kind and intensity or even the content of faith becomes a cultural struggle. Religion and culture then become the point of

reference; distributive and participation conflicts turn into identity conflicts. As a consequence, cultural struggle permeates social fights.

Thus, caution is advised when interpreting conflicts between Protestants, Catholics, Muslims, Hindus, Orthodoxes as culturally induced, i.e. as caused by the very substance of the respective culture or religion ("cosmologies").

So let us conclude: The micro level of politics is also not suitable to support the thesis of the "clash of civilizations". Nevertheless, as the public debate shows, cultural differences and religious incompatibilities are very often considered to be the main cause of these conflicts.

III

Now, there has been a debate on cultural conflicts in international diplomacy for quite a while. How is this debate to be interpreted? In international conferences "Asian" and "Islamic" values are opposed to "Western values" and conversely. Western values are described as individualist, Asian and Islamic ones as collectivist. The universal human rights propagated in the Human Rights Declarations and Covenants are criticized to be Western-eurocentric and are, thus, the paragon of an individualist culture for which reason some governments in Asia and the Middle East deny their universal validity.

Here it is worthwhile reminding of several precursors of this debate. Before 1933 in Germany "Western civilizational values" that were regarded as superficial had been contrasted with substantially different, profound "German values", and this assessment was not only articulated by peripheral figures. There was a similar discussion in Czarist Russia whose spokesmen could count on Germany's intellectual support. After the breakdown of the Soviet Union the old cultural debate in Russia revived-the only difference being that the former coalition partner in spirit, Germany, has meanwhile joined the "Western civilization". During the era of the Soviet Union in the ideological debates of really existing socialism "socialist values" were set against "Western-bourgeois" ones. However, socialist values were not understood as expressing old culture but as a break with tradition: as a programmatic starting point of a completely new social project and a new type of man. Compared with this understanding the advocates of Asian and Islamic values emphasize the rootedness of such values in centuries-old cultural traditions.

But neither at the official nor at the unofficial level do Asians all along the line stand up for "Asian" values. Not even in East and Southeast Asia where this debate started from do they agree. In Japan, Korea and Taiwan they, by and large, did not take any particular interest in this discussion. The pioneers of the debate were Singapore and Malaysia. Later, the Chinese government followed the positions propagated by these two countries. But different voices can even be heard from Malaysia. While Prime Minister Mahathir is a decided spokesman of collective Asian values, his deputy Anwar Ibrahim, not less forceful, pleads for a modern cosmopolitan Islam. In Singapore for many years opposition against the authoritarian values defined by the leading autocrats has been articulated as well. Asian non-governmental organizations in their countries and at the Vienna Human Rights Conference in 1993 vehemently protested against the local rulers' attempts to declare Asian culture to be

incompatible with human rights and democracy. Even years ago the present president of South Korea, Kim Dae-jung, in an argument with Lee Kuan Yew who is one of the most distinguished advocates of Asian values drew attention to the fact that human dignity and political legitimacy are values well articulated in old Chinese social philosophy: Kim reminded of Menzius' thesis on the need of legitimation for all political rule. And even Lee Kuan Yew recently interpreted Asian values as a necessary, though only temporary, orientation for Asia's transition to modern, cosmopolitan societies which will have to live up to worldwide competition.

As far as "Islamic values" are concerned, it is striking that they are maintained in the Arab-Iranian region especially. Here, prominent fundamentalist authors are at home, who plead for the resuscitation of the *sharia*. In contrast, a debate on a reform-oriented Islam is led in Southeast Asia mainly. This different emphasis in the discourses on Islam reflects the chronic crisis of development in North Africa and the Middle East on the one hand and the relatively, though by no means secured, successful development in Southeast Asia.

IV

When interpreting non-European processes, the European development should not be disregarded. Western values and, in particular, human rights have been expounded as a product of European culture. This is right: They, indeed, are a product of the European development. But what does "European culture" or "European development" mean? When letting European culture start with Greek Antiquity, then it is 2500 years old. However, the idea of human rights and the struggle for their acknowledgement were a relevant political factor only during the last 250 years. What we presently associate with human rights was not contained in the original "cultural genes" of Europe. The predominant part of European history, as well as cultural history, does not show any sympathy towards those preferences for which human rights stand. Therefore it is far-fetched to suppose that for reason of an inner logic European history had to end straightforwardly in a victory of the idea of human rights.

Even the history of human rights itself reveals that this is not the case. So the human rights declarations of the late 18th century speak of the people and mankind, but in fact only part of mankind was meant. Those who did not have any education and did not possess any property were not included; women, children, coloreds and slaves were excluded. What started in an excluding way was not extended later because there is an inherent logic leading from exclusion to inclusion (although such logic may exist in the abstract) but because the excluded were no longer willing to bear this situation and began to demand equal rights-until the idea finally prevailed that referring to human rights means *all* people *notwithstanding their concrete circumstances*.

The *abstract individual* regardless of sex, age and color did not exist in the traditional European society which was graduated according to estates and other feudal arrangements. The idea of such an individual only emerged when social inequality became unbearable: in view of flagrant gaps between privileged and discriminated strata, between wealth and poverty, and also in view of new bourgeois layers that experienced the conventional social

framework, the *ancien régime*, to be incompatible with their own social, economic and political aspirations. From this constellation the politically explosive force *against Europe's own tradition* arose that finally brought the idea of human rights to fruition. Only then man so far defined collectivistically by status was liberated to man per se. Only then people were conceived as basically equal and endowed with inalienable rights and dignity.

This was a fundamental turning point in European history. It is much more far-reaching than assumed in the international debate on values, in which the idea of human rights is falsely interpreted as an expression of an eternal European culture or as the final result of a cultural-genetic predisposition. In reality human rights and the policy of human rights have always been the outcome of public protests of the masses during phases of social upheavals, of a "colère publique" initiated by politically subversive forces and social-revolutionary movements.

V

Regarding European development in this way is of importance in order to understand the cultural debates going on outside of Europe. There, to a certain extent, the conflicts known from recent European history repeat themselves. All non-European societies today are experiencing fundamental changes that end in an internal pluralization of values. This transformation results in a shattering of traditions while new orientations become overdue. Some want to imitate Europe, others revive their own tradition. And others believe that it is possible to combine old values with modern technology.

Not surprisingly, the European lines of argumentation of the late 18th and during the 19th centuries show up again in the rest of the world: Status quo-powers understand universalistic individual human rights as a threat to conventional values, their own tradition and standards of decency, whereas the advocates of human rights are no longer willing to bow to autocratic or despotic regimes, to economic exploitation as well as to social and cultural discrimination. For the latter, human rights once again become a political weapon.

Once again, the "colère publique" puts the idea of human rights on the political agenda. And once more the result is not predetermined since also outside of Europe there will be a real cultural rift, far more than in the past: *In view of radical economic, social and political changes, the long-standing traditional cultures get-as it happened in Europe once-into conflict with themselves.* Thereby their collectivist-corporatist and, moreover, often patriarchal and paternalist orientation becomes undermined. A "clash *within* civilizations" develops-a conflict constellation that touches the self-image and the order of whole societies and cultural areas.

Into these long-term confrontations about the social and political order outside of Europe, Europe could bring in its own historic experience. If a true picture of Europe's real history would be passed on, a certain sensitivity could be fostered for the imperative and legitimacy of cultural pluralization and the concomitant conflicts; a sense of tolerance and corresponding institutional arrangements could be conveyed as well. This would counter the trend towards the essentialization or ontologization of cultures that both falsify history, which

often make the intercultural dialogue and also the discussion on human rights so unfruitful. Unfortunately, the thesis of the "clash of civilizations" has again revived this unrealistic and politically barren misinterpretation.

VI

Future cultural clashes will not be fought between "civilizations". However, this will be no impediment for further arguments about the clash of civilizations at the diplomatic level. In recognition conflicts as well as distributive conflicts directed against discrimination, a politicization of cultural differences will be noticeable whenever fairly satisfactory, pragmatic solutions remain blocked. But, repeating the European experience, the real cultural clashes will be fought "*within* civilizations" for a long time: at least until in extra-European cultural regions the pluralization of society and culture will be considered as irreversible and a congenial way of conflict management, e.g. the democratic-constitutional state or some alternative will be implemented.

In 1998, Europe remembered the Edict of Nantes (1598)- a decree in which the French king ordained tolerance from the top not without having in mind his own power political interests. And it took centuries before tolerance ultimately became an accepted virtue, a *civic virtue*, for the political class and for most people in Europe, successively. The necessary collective learning processes were difficult and quite painful. Therefore, one is well advised to recall Europe's real history if one wants to understand the conflicts resulting from modernization processes which inevitably are going to happen in non-Western societies in the forthcoming decades.

II

2. Intercultural Philosophy in Today's World

In a world that is becoming palpably more interdependent it is unsurprising that a philosophy that is based on and rooted in the comparison of cultures, that is *intercultural philosophy*, is considered to be a new intellectual challenge. A comparable observation can be made in other areas, so for instance international lawyers are asking whether a "world law" will emerge that is not any more based on individual sovereign states and which has an autonomous legal scope extending beyond the law of nations (or international law). "Globalization" and its effects, right down to the smallest social unit, have developed into a major analytical issue for economists, sociologists and political scientists. Moreover, the social sciences have again discovered comparative approaches as an ideal way of cognition, enabling them to acquire a truly transnational, international or even global perspective. In view of such comparable intellectual endeavors "intercultural philosophy" is therefore in good company.¹

The world, however, has not only become more interdependent; it is today quite different from the way it was in passed centuries and millenniums. In the past both practical and/or systematic intentions encouraged considerable philosophical thought on the basic problems of life. Historically seen, most philosophical ideas have been developed in the context of *traditional* (i.e. pre-industrial) society whereas today the key intellectual challenges originate in a completely different context world-wide: On the one hand they are the result of the radical transformation of traditional societies (a fact that is true of four fifths of humanity); and on the other they are based on the continuous social change in societies which are already considered to be modern and advanced. In view of the politico-theoretical and/or socio-philosophical substance of intercultural philosophy one cannot avoid registering this historically incomparable process of radical global change which has taken place during the past three centuries. This registration is absolutely crucial if the challenges which result from such change and their effect on intercultural philosophy are to be perceived correctly.

This paper will discuss this fact and its implications:

2.1 The Restructuring of the World: Its Intellectual and Practical Effects

What is already known from personal experience is now confirmed by international statistics: The number of human beings still living in an *oikos*-economy (self-sufficient or subsistence economy) is consistently falling world-wide.² The urbanization of peasant societies, which has been happening in Europe since 1750, is a process which has spread. This has lead to a continuously increasing urbanization of the entire world. This fact has recently been

¹ For a comprehensive philosophical debate see Ram Adhar Mall: *Philosophie im Vergleich der Kulturen*, Darmstadt 1995. See also the series *Studies in Intercultural Philosophy* published in Amsterdam/Atlanta, GA by Editions Rodopi B.V.

² An excellent publication on the structure and dynamics of traditional societies written from a comparative perspective and synthetizing many findings is Patricia Crone: *Pre-industrial Societies*, Oxford 1989.

documented by Habitat II; the last major UN-conference of this century. The integration of villages into extensive production circuits and the trade flows in big urban agglomerations imply an enormous extension of mental range and freedom of action and furthermore an intensification of communication for the people in these villages. For the first time in history such people acquire the ability to organize more than their immediate surroundings. As a rule this development is accompanied by a time lag. This is associated with the increase in literacy which heightens the average competence level of people and allows a "skill revolution" to take place. This, in turn, serves as the basis for upward socio-economic and cultural mobility. Within this new environment people are exposed to a variety of media which enables them to make comparisons with the lifestyle and life expectancy in other parts of the world. It should therefore not be surprising that all these structural and mental changes lead to the emphatic claim to participate in politics.

Politicization is therefore an integral part of the changes which societies undergo: Political marginality and/or apathy, key characteristics of traditional societies, become phenomena of the past. The longer and more far-reaching the process of change is, the more signs of fissuring the societies undergoing such change are likely to show, as interests, identities and rival ideas of justice, equity and "truth" multiply during such transformation.

This fact could be described as a process of fundamental politicization: All social problems become political and all political issues become social. As a result structures undergoing this process of change tend to be laden with conflict or violence, making *peaceful coexistence* a basic problem. The essential question will be: How can societies, both modernizing and modern, learn to cope with conflictual plurality peacefully and therefore stop civil wars becoming 'normal' - something written off as 'a fact of life'? In other words: How can such societies learn to deal in a civilized way with inescapable conflicts which arise from the pluralization of politicized interests and identities?

The demonstrated problem, that is the widespread and fundamental politicization of socially mobile societies and the corresponding requirement for widespread non-violent conflict management, did not exist in traditional societies. It is therefore unsurprising that traditional philosophy (particularly in its politico-theoretical and socio-philosophical articulations) does not tackle this problem. In traditional societies all over the world philosophy as a whole has been "cosmocentrically" focused: In particular in high-mythology it comprehended "cosmos", society and people holistically as an organic unity. The world was conceived as a well-organized and well-structured hierarchy with a static architecture, in which roles and role-specific behavior were rigidly pre-determined. Historical thought was cyclical, though not in the same sense as is sometimes used currently as these cycles always returned to the same initial point - akin to the annual rhythm in nature or the cyclical occurrences in the political field (rise, peak and decline of imperial structures).³

If under cosmocentric premises institutions of community and of rule form a single organic unit, then conflicts are considered to be dysfunctional. They are interpreted as the "great unrest or turmoil under the sky"; the cause either of threatening chaos or the expression of already present chaos. Contrary thought patterns can therefore be seen as a contribution to

³ A still fascinating comparative study on traditional philosophies is Ernst Topitsch: *Vom Ursprung und Ende der Metaphysik*, Wien 1958.

the control of chaos: Philosophy, particularly of a political or sociological nature, becomes a chaos control and reversal mechanism which is used to restore cosmic order.

In the philosophy of ancient China there are writings which correspond to this mentality, in some senses a *locus classicus* for anti-chaos thinking.⁴ But do the half-traditional, half-modern authors living 2500 years later really differ from these early philosophical efforts? Is Hegel's "Philosophy of Law" published in 1820 not focused on chaos? In accordance with his well known, three tiered, legal-philosophical construct, he locates the actual moral spirit in the "family". Anticipating and observing modernity correctly, he states that "civil society" is full of competition, conflicts and cleavages and therefore devoid of moral substantiality, and subsequently he conceives the "state" as the embodiment of morality: "the reality of the moral idea" (§ 257).

Be that as it may, in view of the reality of modernity conventional philosophy is overly simple. Particularly with regard to politico-theoretical or socio-philosophical issues it is inappropriate to expect complex analysis from traditional philosophy since the complex face of modern reality was as yet unknown.

2.2 Civilizing Unintentionally

What then is the modern reaction to the modern reality of fundamental politicization? How is it possible to overcome "modern chaos" and the ongoing restlessness in modern society?

This problem was first experienced from around 1750 in that part of Europe in which the above mentioned radical social change originally started. In retrospect it can be understood as a historical search process: The search for answers to new structural conflicts led to immense controversy and extensive discussion. These were societies which were in danger of gradually losing the material, institutional and mental basis of unity, that is their social hierarchy and the static architecture once characteristic of the *ancien régime*. All these disputes began in small circles which broadened out to the point of being on a mass level.

The modern answer to the "chaos-problem" was and still is a six-fold one which, slightly exaggerated as an ideal type, can be outlined as follows:

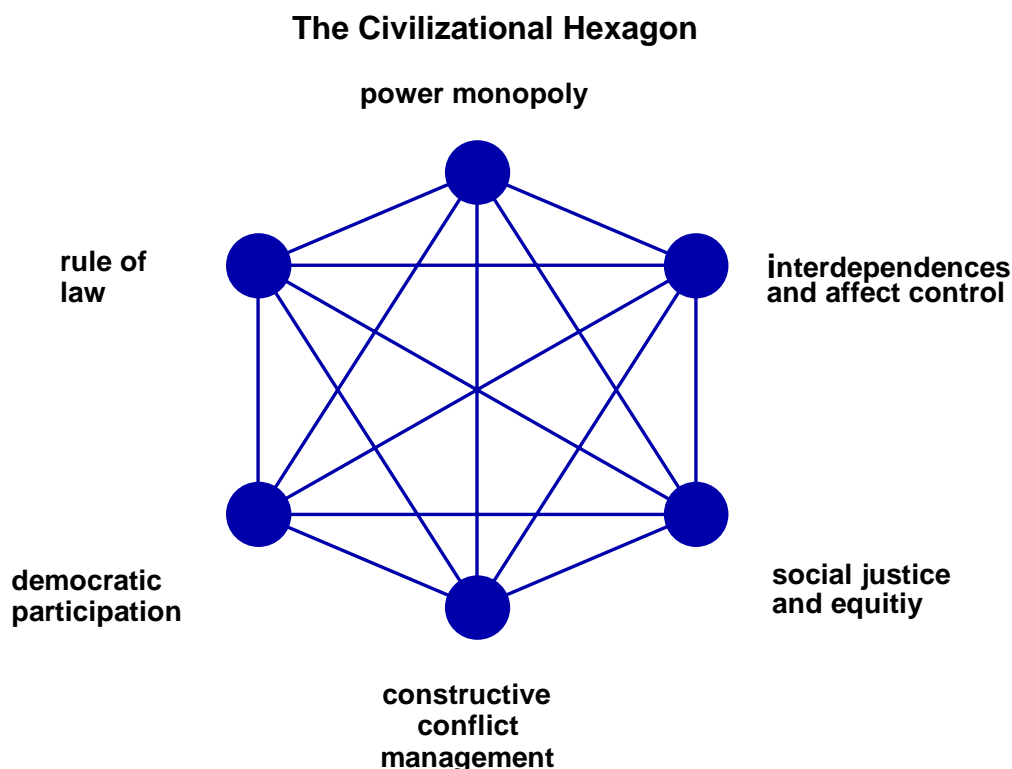
- (1) The disarmament of the politicized citizens and the institutionalization of a *monopoly of violence* makes discourse and "deliberative policy" necessary.
- (2) The *rule of law* legitimizes the monopoly of violence and establishes the rules of the game by which remaining and inevitable substantial conflicts of interests and identity can be managed.
- (3) The change from traditional to modern society allows multifaceted role expectations to develop for each individual. The result of this, in view of functionally differentiated *long chains of actions*, is everyone having a broad range of roles, which in turn generally leads to a fracturing of the conflict and to *affect control*.

⁴ Among many studies see Elbert Duncan Thomas: *Chinese Political Thought*, New York 1968; Hubert Schleichert: *Klassische chinesische Philosophie*, Frankfurt 1990 (2nd ed.).

(4) Changing societies create the demand for *democratic participation*. This becomes irrefutable if a problematic build-up of conflicts, resulting from non-participation, is to be avoided.

(5) Moreover: In socially mobile, politicized societies debate on the issues of *justice, equity* and *fairness* is inevitable. Without corresponding endeavors the rules of the game in public discourse and in conflict management remain without material substance and therefore without legitimization.

(6) Wherever there is synchronization of the above mentioned building blocks, the possibility of creating a general political *culture of constructive conflict management* exists.



Neither these six factors or building blocks, nor their interconnections ("the civilizational hexagon")⁵ have been pre-destined in the traditional European (let us say Western European) culture. The development of each component can be interpreted as a process *against intention*: Viewed historically disarmament has always been the result of victory or defeat in competitive rivalries and contests: The powerful defeated the weak, the superordinate commanded the subordinate. The rule of law had its roots in the compromises which were wrung out of the partners in a conflict and which were naturally not chosen voluntarily, but amounted to tactical concessions in fragile power contest situations. A self-determined existence in a short-range, easily comprehensible, environment has always been preferred to a life dependent on functional systems operating at an extensive abstract level: The current popular social-theoretical conceptual differentiation between the systemic world and every-day life, as well as the early diagnosis of being "discontent in culture" (S. Freud),

⁵ In some length I have developed the "civilizational hexagon" in my book: *Wohin driftet die Welt? Über die Zukunft friedlicher Koexistenz*, Frankfurt/Main 1994, pp. 17-49.

in view of an environment which makes an illusion out of the "small is beautiful" paradigm, points in this direction: Affect control is not determined by the pleasure principle but by the imperatives of the principle of reality. The struggle for increasing participation has always come up against strong defence mechanisms, and the same can be said about the fight for distributive justice and fairness. Neither the one nor the other has simply been granted, but rather both have had to be wrung from those with the actual power. Finally, the culture of constructive conflict management could only emerge under the favourable circumstances of all six components becoming historically powerful realities, which combined synergetically and finally embedded themselves emotionally. Only under such pre-conditioned terms has it been possible to civilize conflict. In other words the principally peaceful management of conflict has become possible despite all the fundamental politicization.

The process can only be understood as the historical outcome of many conflicts which have taken place within the European context and which have followed, in the above-mentioned sense, a certain step-wise development. The result is constructive conflict management with constitutional, institutional and material dimensions, which are characterized by a specific mentality. This historical construct equals an *artificial civilizational product*. It is therefore plausible to argue that fundamental politicization will result from pushing through particular interests and accentuating specific identity. That in fact possessive individualism and lobbyist drives are in a certain sense "natural". However tolerance, sensibility for the rules of the game, self-restraint, division of power, willingness to compromise and the ability to empathize, are more or less the "artificial" outcome of arduous collective learning processes. *All these latter civilizational achievements have been fought for in Europe against its own cultural tradition and could only be realized as a result of conflicts with its own past, as it were in opposition to its own heritage.* This is a fact which is basically forgotten in the present intercultural debate.

To interpret the way conflict is civilized in Western societies, as being based on the essence of Western culture would be totally wrong. Neither the single components of the civilizational hexagon nor their combination have been culture-genetically predestined. This fact can also be applied to those value orientations that are today typically associated world-wide with "Europe" and/or the "West": rationality, individualism, pluralism and so on. These values are *late* products of a prolonged development process and are still in dispute today. It seems to be rather eccentric in the light of history to state, as Husserl did in 1935, that European man has an inborn entelechy penetrating European history, giving it a kind of predetermined essential or substantial direction.⁶

⁶ Edmund Husserl: *Die Krisis des europäischen Menschentums und die Philosophie*, Weinheim 1995 (reed., p. 28). The original statement runs: "Ich meine, wir fühlen es (und bei aller Unklarheit hat dieses Gefühl wohl sein Recht), daß unserem europäischen Menschentum eine Entelechie eingeboren ist, die den europäischen Gestaltenwandel durchherrscht und ihm den Sinn einer Entwicklung auf eine ideale Lebens- und Seinsgestalt als einen ewigen Pol verleiht."

2.3 The World-wide Decline of Cultural Essentialism

Civilizing against one's own intentions: This definition is significant because it basically contradicts the idea of cultural essentialism. There are many examples in European History (and in the history of the Western world more generally) of cultural conflicts which led to unintended results, and similar conflicts are now in full swing in other parts of the world. The initial structural changes mentioned before can be observed with, of course, differing intensity in different parts of the world. Traditional societies change into socially mobilized ones, as they are unable to withstand the ongoing politicization. The difference to the same process in Europe is basically that this modernizing process outside the West has always taken place in an international context that was defined by Europe. Since the time of colonialism and imperialism Europe has been the source of a world-wide economic and cultural out-competition, imposing peripheralization and marginalization on the rest of the world. The influence of European Modernity, a foreign and overpowering force in other cultural regions, has up until now always been more powerful than the influence of other cultures outside Europe on European development. Furthermore the radical cultural change resulting from ongoing modernization outside Europe cannot, as a rule, be imagined without the continuous impact of Europe/ the West.

There have been, however, very different reactions which in the individual cases do not necessarily exclude one another and which can in some cases be observed simultaneously or in sequence. The following four reactions are particularly characteristic:

1. Modernistic-imitative is a reaction which accepts the challenge of the West and which in fact even takes the West as its example and fights against the burden of local tradition (including traditional culture). Following such a line the progressive intellectual and political movements in China in the first decades of this century had fundamentally criticized the Chinese traditional system and "Confucianism". Both were stigmatized as being responsible for the structural backwardness of China and particularly for the humiliation which the country suffered. Here as well as in many other cases the solutions or prescriptions regarded as useful for overcoming the social-political malaise were quite varied: republicanism, nationalism, constitutionalism, socialism, democracy, anarchism and so forth. The corresponding practical endeavors at that time failed however, but today a modernistic-imitative attitude is effectively successful in newly industrializing countries like Korea and Taiwan. These NICs are even currently in the process of becoming democracies. Their political culture, in the foreseeable future, will be almost no different from that of Western countries. In this area, during the last 20 years, "civilization hexagons" have been emerging with breathtaking speed.

2. Wherever radical socio-political changes take place, custodians of different intentions come into being: traditionalists, reactionaries, and particularly conservatives. If possible, they want to turn back the clock of history or at the very least to stop modernization. Gandhi could be assigned to this last category. His philosophy was egalitarian, and village-oriented and anti-commercial. It favored small units, and in particular consensual direct democracy on a small scale. Anti-modernists have, since the earliest modernization initiatives, always been particularly prominent in Russia. Like their predecessors the anti-modernists of today still consider themselves supporters of slavonianism (whatever this may mean specifically) and

therefore against the West. This type of reaction can be observed everywhere in the world where non-European traditions are confronted with Western ideas.

3. Wherever such radical changes take place half-modernists can be observed. They want to open the window to the West as far as possible to let in technological know-how. But they want to keep out cultural influences as much as possible. After the Meiji-restoration Japan pursued such policies. Many socialist states were similarly motivated by hopes of technological transfer without cultural cross-over. The project of these states was meant to be a definite alternative to Western civil society: instead of individualism, collectivism; instead of pluralism and division of powers, the power monopoly of one party, i.e. power concentration; instead of critical public, the synchronization of public opinions into one line; instead of market competition, the planned economy, and so forth. Incidentally in Germany during the 20's and the 30's "deep German values" were still being propagated against the "shallow" (particularly French and American) values of Western civilization.⁷

This position, modernizing industrial-technologically but maintaining autochthonous values, is today found particularly in the "Singapore-School". This position is one of being interested in opening the windows to let in progressive technological and scientific know-how while insisting on applying close-meshed thought screens to keep out despised Western values. In particular, Western individualism is to be kept out in order to maintain the "Asian orientation" towards the group values of family, clan, group or team. Sense of duty and public virtues are displayed as contrasting with the Western orientation towards protecting the rights of people as individuals. Consent, harmony and unity are confronted with supposedly dividing principles like majority decisions. Eagerness to learn, hard work and economizing are seen as a contrast to the post-modern Western society which is so keen on experimenting with new ways of life. The Western Modern Age is therefore accepted in one of its dimensions (modern technology), but is completely rejected in another: that of modern private and public values.⁸

4. Wherever the Modern Age and tradition clash with radical changes as the result, innovations are overdue. In some cases, for example in Western Africa directly after decolonization, this need for innovation is explicitly articulated. Nkrumah as political leader (among others) reasoned correctly that post-colonial Africa was in need of a new identity, its own "African personality". The argument was that this identity should be based on three components: on the traditional culture of Africa, on Islam (wherever this was present) and on Western-Christian values. Essential ideas should be drawn from all three sources in order to create something new: a new consciousness that combines and uses these components innovatively and eclectically. "Consciencism" became the key-word for politico-cultural innovation.

The quest for innovation, however, creates more questions than can be answered briefly. As an example: In the Quran the duty for mutual consultation is established: "Mutual

⁷ That debate is basically finished with the exception of some articulations at the very margin of the cultural life in present-day Germany.

⁸ I have debated the tenets of the "Singapore-School" in a paper "On Asian and Other Values", published by the Kim-Dae-jung Foundation: *Democratization and Regional Cooperation in Asia*, Seoul 1996, pp. 67-81.

consultation should be your duty" (Quran 3: 159). How to define this duty in modern terms and circumstances is a still unresolved question. If this duty is seen as a conceptual platform for modern democracy what would it mean for societies which consider themselves to be "Islamic"? What is an "authentic Islamic democracy" in a socially mobile and politicized community, rather than in a traditional society? Or, to cite another example: Singapore and East Asia as a whole are reaching a point where economic success based on extensive growth will be no longer possible. As is demonstrated by the corresponding development processes, however, the change from extensive to intensive growth demands socio-political innovation. To the dismay of the "Singapore-School" this innovation can hardly be conceived of without intellectual and political opening. Which direction will it take? Will public space in the future be structured differently than in the West? Will there really be innovations with solid (East) Asian characteristics?

Everywhere outside the European/Western world *basic* conflicts can be observed over the direction of social development and in particular over the structures of public order which once prevailed in the West but which are now no longer politically virulent. All over the world the European experience is being repeated: As soon as traditional cultures are confronted with modernization and societies have to face structural changes and the associated cultural transformation, *these cultures become subject to internal conflict*. This was the case in Western Europe, and is now a common phenomenon. The background is well-known: To begin with there are doubts about whether the traditional culture can sustain further development in view of the new challenges. The wish simply to maintain the ancestral culture and to avoid massive modernization is an obvious reaction if the challenge of modernization is felt to be too big. It is moreover very tempting to use traditional culture as an insurance policy for the maintenance of one's own identity whilst being able to enjoy technical innovations without reservation. This type of reaction can help to cushion the pressure of adaptation and with it the anomic results of modernization.

In the long run there will, however, be no alternative to imitation and/or innovation. The complexity of policy, society, economy *and culture* is growing outside Europe and the Western sphere. In order to avoid chronic conflicts (i.e. civil wars), this new complexity must be matched by correspondingly complex institutional arrangements and mentalities.

It cannot be presumed that seen from a global historical point of view innovations within modernity, particularly in relation to coping with the internal problems of coexistence in complex societies, have completely ceased. On the contrary, four-fifths of humanity will have to experiment to find suitable answers to the problems of social mobilization and fundamental politicization. In many cases this will probably develop in ways contrary to their own traditional philosophies and their own preferences. It is unlikely that the answers which prove to be viable will be invented on a drawing-board. Repetition of the European experience is far more probable, that is that: *The arrangements which have been found to be suitable will be the unintended result of political conflicts*. Social and political philosophy have always been part of these conflicts, and they will remain to be part of them in the world outside Europe. In other places in the world such conflicts will dissolve the very basis in which cultural essentialism is rooted. Essentialist groupings will, however, always keep a voice of their own.

The question is as to what the plural of "Islam" is (Islams?)? In view of inter-cultural dialogue it will be necessary to keep an eye on the complete spectrum of cultural articulations. For example the differing realities of Islam: traditionalists, fundamentalists with a religious background and those primarily focused on a politico-etatistic program, reformers counting on reason and science, laicists, mystics and those who only and exclusively want the Text ("sola scriptura") to be considered. What is valid for Islam is also relevant in other cultures. Dialogue between these different cultures should be very interesting as many of them are escaping essentialist definitions as a result of radical socio-economic changes and corresponding modifications of their traditions. This leads to a process of self-reflection in cultures outside Europe. A side effect could be the rediscovery of diversity in the individual cultures which has been covered up or lost in the course of time. Thus, the political philosophy in ancient China, for example, presented itself objectively as much more diversified than the common conception of "Confucianism" (meaning State Confucianism) would suggest.

2.4 Conclusions

Intercultural philosophy has to face the reality of today's world, particularly if it is interested in socio-philosophical issues. This world is, however, completely different from the one that existed during the time in which classical philosophy came into being. Outside the European-Western cultural area social and political philosophy needs to take a critical look at the very political, socio-economic and cultural complexity that arises in its own environment. Intellectual differentiation processes will follow since their emergence cannot be successfully contained by any kind of obsolete cultural essentialism, although such containment is often attempted by authoritarian states. Thus, cultures and their characteristic philosophical profiles suffer inner turmoil: As a rule the many reactions to this new situation cannot be reduced to one single common denominator. This is the objective basis for cultural diversification and diversity.

If inter-cultural dialogue wishes to contribute to better understanding and maybe even to productive management then it cannot escape this situation. The hopes for a successful inter-cultural dialogue as well as for inter-cultural political and social philosophy lie in the fact that in the recent past all cultures have been suffering inner conflict and turmoil with the result that they have become more self-reflective. This is part of the modern politicized world. Based on such conditions it will be possible for the first time in world history to begin an up-to-date dialogue which is truly *inter-cultural*: not so much from culture to culture but more between cultural segments all over the world. We will not then experience any more debates about "imagined cultures" but about representations of (and highly diversified) cultures as they exist in reality.⁹

⁹ Clifford Geertz had, most likely, something similar in mind when he was talking about a "world in pieces". See his lectures, given in Vienna and so far only available in German: *Welt in Stücken. Kultur und Politik am Ende des 20. Jahrhunderts*, Wien 1996.

3. Is There a Point in Looking Back? The Relevance of the Classical Chinese Philosophy for Modern China

3.1 Problematique

Compared to all the states which currently exist, China looks back on the longest and most unbroken tradition. The fact that this extensive history, that really has no equivalent in any other part of the world, can be seen not only as a positive asset but also as a burden, has been discussed in China with ever increasing intensity since the middle of the 19th century. These discussions had immense practical socio-political significance as they involved the question of how China could be modernized in order to withstand the impact of imperialists - initially in the form of the Western powers and later on in the form of the Japanese - and thus develop at its own pace into a modern society. These discussions were not of a casual nature; they touched the existential foundations - political, economic, social, cultural and infrastructural - of the country.

These discussions initiated a particular tradition of criticizing the Chinese tradition. The interpretations varied enormously. Various contrasting positions emerged based on differing premises, and with different stated aims: Monarchists who hoped to strengthen (and later restore) the old empire rubbed metaphorical shoulders with anarchists. Blueprints for modernizing dictatorships were in competition with pleas for liberalism, republicanism, democracy and socialism. Many such concrete socio-political positions which focused on gaining and displaying power were marked by syncretism, that is practical philosophical and societal ideas, which in other countries (as in their place of origin, Europe) had been kept strictly separate, were amalgamated.

The Chinese "cultural debate" (in the broadest sense of the term) since the middle of the last century is not something peculiar to China: The variety of interpretations, the amalgamation of positions and high levels of syncretism can be observed in all societies in which intense public debates on development and/or modernization have taken place. In these societies the impact of *early modernizers* was always in conflict with the individual cultural traditions (the term, again, used in a broad sense including the characteristics of public order). In view of the relative stagnation over a long period prior to 1911, that is during the twilight of the empire, it is obvious that the so-called "Confucian Order" (better characterized as neo-Confucian Order) was on the defensive. It failed to formulate policies and tactics to manage the deficits of Chinese modernization successfully. Although in the process of a mildly self-critical discussion, Neo-Confucianism had not much intellectual leverage since it was rightly understood as being part of the problem rather than the solution. It was no less a calamity for the country, a cause of its decay, and ultimately it did not offer ideas on how to get out of the dead end in which the country found itself. Along with Neo-Confucianism, Confucianism fell in disrepute: Confucianism, too, was often interpreted as part of the problem and not as the starting point for a solution.

China's tragedy was that the cultural debate prior to 1949, which revolved around the fundamental options for development of the country, was always highly politicized. This meant that they were necessarily entangled with the political conflicts of their era. This fact

was further intensified by the victory of the Communist Party of China in 1949 and by the intellectual bias and lopsidedness that it brought with it. This "line struggle" between the positions of Mao and Liù finally led to the dubious peak of Maoism through a campaign against Confucianism, (a campaign which also had connections to the anti-Beethoven campaign). Following an interlude of intensive cultural debate in the 1980's, a sort of "cultural fever", the latest Chinese tragedy seems to be of a restoration of "Confucianism". In more precise terms in the 90's there has been a reversion to one form or another of long-standing Neo-Confucianism. As often seen in Chinese history, this reversion focuses on the re-establishment of the power of an out of date autocratic political regime. This is a regime which, seen even in a Sino-Marxist light, has in the face of dynamically developing productive forces outlived itself objectively.¹

The result of this change, which had its origins in the Tiananmen Square Massacre in June 1989, was not simply to interrupt the cultural debate of the 80's. By strengthening the absolute power of the communist party the chance of extending the cultural debate beyond the process undertaken in the nineteen-eighties of simply reproducing ideas from the first half of the century was lost. This was a wasted opportunity for China and the rest of East Asia to connect with the much older traditions, both positive and negative, of classical Chinese philosophy. This type of reconstruction could have laid an autochthonous foundation for the social and political development of the country, and furthermore contributed to the international cultural debate.²

However, is it now still seriously possible to take up classical Chinese philosophy, i.e. the philosophy of the time that Karl Jaspers referred to as the *axis period*³ (6th to 2nd century BC) as a source of inspiration or even as a practical guide?

3.2 Points of Reference

Three links come to mind immediately: The first is the fact that classical Chinese philosophy is in itself more or less a philosophy for the management of crises.⁴ It could also be described as a chaos management philosophy as it focused its practical attention on the re-establishment of public order when it had deteriorated to a critical point (or indeed to the foundation of public order when it was completely lacking). The focus was on the loss of morality, decency and propriety. Extravagance, corruption, moral misbehavior and loss of the model character were denounced as part of the status quo. Smaller battles and bigger wars

¹ Beate Geist gives profound information about the debate of the 80s and the so-called "cultural fever" including a detailed review of earlier decades of this century: *Die Modernisierung der chinesischen Kultur. Kulturdebatte und kultureller Wandel im China der 80er Jahre*, Hamburg 1996. On earlier decades see also Luis Gutheinz: *China im Wandel. Das chinesische Denken im Umbruch seit dem 19. Jahrhundert*, München 1985; Hermann Halbeisen: *Demokratie ohne Volksherrschaft. Aspekte des politischen Denkens chinesischer Liberaler in der Nanking-Zeit, 1927-1937*, Bochum 1991.

² A relevant attempt (including Chinese contributions) can be found in Silke Krieger and Rolf Trauzettel (eds.): *Konfuzianismus und die Modernisierung Chinas*, Mainz 1990. See also Wang Gungwu: *The Chineseness of China*, Oxford 1991 as well as Robert E. Allinson (ed.): *Understanding the Chinese Mind. The Philosophical Roots*, Oxford 1989.

³ Karl Jaspers: *Vom Ursprung und Ziel der Geschichte*, München 1949.

⁴ Especially informative regarding this point is Ralf Moritz: *Die Philosophie im alten China*, Berlin 1990, because he relates history of thought and real history.

were the rule. Chinese historiography found its own term for these: "*warring states*". The chaos they provoked (*luan*) is still present in the general consciousness, as is the "war lordism" of the early decades of this century which could be compared to it.

The classical Chinese philosophy tried to find solutions for overcoming the decay, decline and decadence of the old order. The dominant representatives of this philosophy wanted to prove their usefulness: They offered advice to the powerful of the time in order to convince them of their own project of chaos management. Re-establishing order, in other words: re-establishing peace, was one of the most important targets of Chinese thinking in that period. Furthermore in today's China the question of how and in which direction public order will or should develop in the coming decades is still at the top of the agenda. Although this is currently happening on account of the political circumstances more or less subliminally.

These schools of thought in classical Chinese philosophy however had astonishing diversity. Slightly exaggerating this, the term "hundred philosophical schools" is used to describe what is said to have been an intensive, continuous interchange of criticism and counter-criticism over the course of several centuries. A growing tradition of self-criticism, which characterized the period between 1850 and the first few decades of this century, was obviously already valid for the period of classical Chinese philosophy. There may never have been a hundred schools of philosophy, but the positions fought for were without doubt extremely contradictory. The debate documented of an intensive and polemical nature with the statement of position and counter-position, criticism and counter-criticism, comment and counter-comment.⁵ *Spiritual pluralism*: what an autochthonous starting point for today's developing socio-economic pluralistic China! This situation makes undifferentiated present discussions on "Confucianism" in China somewhat dubious, as any essentialistic argument on Chinese culture is going to be deprived of its foundation.

Third: Some significant points of departure which concentrate on the possibility of establishing public order and social stability permanently are of special interest here. They concern various propositions for a socio-politically comprehensive "project of chaos-management". The following considerations focus on these propositions.⁶

⁵ In an interesting study Gregor Paul investigated how far critical rationalism (Popper) corresponds with classical Chinese philosophy. See Gregor Paul: *Die Aktualität der klassischen chinesischen Philosophie. Rationalitätskonzepte im frühen Konfuzianismus, im Neo-Mohismus und im Legalismus*, München 1987. A French overall survey can recently be found in Anne Cheng: *Histoire de la pensée chinoise*, Paris 1997.

⁶ Besides the documents of classical Chinese philosophy which are available in English or German translations, the following general surveys are of great help. From the Chinese point of view: Yu-Lan: *The History of Chinese Philosophy*, 2 vols., Princeton 1973; Kung-chuan Hsiao: *A History of Chinese Political Thought*, 2 vols., Princeton 1979; Laurence C. Wu: *Fundamentals of Chinese Philosophy*, London 1978; Tu Wei-ming: *Der Konfuzianismus*, in Arvind Sharma (ed.): *Innenansichten der großen Religionen*, Frankfurt a.M. 1997, pp. 641-769. German treatises are: Hubert Schleichert: *Klassische chinesische Philosophie*, Frankfurt a.M. 1990²; Ralf Moritz: *Die Philosophie im alten China*, Berlin 1990; Heiner Roetz: *Die Chinesische Ethik der Achsenzeit*, Frankfurt a.M. 1992; id.: *Konfuzius*, München 1995; Gregor Paul: *Asien und Europa. Philosophien im Vergleich*, Frankfurt a.M. 1984, part 5 and 6; id.: *Aspects of Confucianism*, Frankfurt a.M. 1990. For a summary see Wolfgang Ommernorn and Peter Weber-Schäfer: *Die politischen Ideen des traditionellen China*, in Pipers *Handbuch der politischen Ideen*, vol. 1, München 1988, pp.41-84. Instructive is also Hans Küng and Julia Ching: *Christentum und chinesische Religion*, München 1988. Recommendable on the subject are Harald Borges: *Drache, Einhorn, Phönix. Über altchinesisches Denken*, Stuttgart 1993; Ernst Schwarz: *Die Weisheit des alten China. Mythos -*

3.3 Classical Paradigms

Chaos-Management I

If morality in a society has gone awry, moral sermonizing can be the media to re-establishing "moral community" (in Tonnies' sense of community). In face of a threatening or actual loss of morality, what may be considered necessary could be characterized as a "push of virtue". Reverting to an utopic morally determined past may seem to be the answer.

This, one might say, may have been the premise of Confucius (551 - 479). His intent was to focus on "*li*", a term with a variety of different translations or interpretations: tradition, rites, politeness, decency, etikett, good behavior, ceremonies, decorum, even religion. All of them together stood for the fundamental idea of "good morals" in *Confucian thought*. With singular linguistic consistency Confucius fought for the "correction of terms". This was essentially the struggle against the decline in morality which itself was seen as a result of the impoverishment of language. Confucius gives the impression of having been a linguistic realist: The correct memory and definition of morals are capable both of reflecting their essence *and* of transmitting an unquestionably valid point of orientation for practical behavior.

Whatever the case may be, the memory of a past with an assumed collective moral integrity creates a position that allows a critical and continuous surveillance of the present. What then is the criticism? The thinking of both Confucius and his followers was characterized by a strong personalization of problems, such as the neglect of morality of key personalities. The principal butt of such criticism was the emperor who, being the true son of heaven, should be a wise ruler, be it as the Good Shepherd or (perhaps without misunderstanding the term) as the human despot. This introduces the most interesting part of the Confucian paradigm: The emperor has a heavenly mandate. This is carried on to the people via officials. If the people get restless, if they revolt, or even rebel, their voice must be taken as the voice of heaven—*vox populi = vox Dei*—although in Confucianism the *Deus* is not God in the sense of Judeo-Christian religion but more as an "immanent transcendence" (i.e. *dao*). Restlessness or rebellion of the people can be seen as a litmus test for the respective ruler, a test of his moral and practical qualities. If he fails, or if he misuses his power by exploitation, corruption and luxury he loses his legitimacy—in the modern sense of the word. He can then rightfully be opposed, though Confucian followers do not generally plead for such action. They would however accept the deposition of a tyrant, if the necessity is created due to the immoral behavior on the part of the ruler.

Understanding this "quality control" of the ruler as an inherent part of the Confucian paradigm is not an exaggeration. Mencius (372 -281) made this point even more explicitly and in doing so made legitimate rulership his central theme. Corresponding considerations are also to be found in the works of Xun Zi (310 -230), the third main follower of Confucius.

It is clear that neither the ruler, as an institution, or his powers are questioned, nor is the graded order between heaven, ruler, officials and people with their varying allocations of "*li*"

Religion - Philosophie - Politik, München 1994. A newer English introduction into the problematique (starting from a classical work) is Roger T. Ames: *The Art of Rulership. A Study of Ancient Chinese Political Thought*, Albany 1994.

in any way doubted. Questioned is the ruler himself; he is the one who is directly criticized and assigned personal guilt. In the case, therefore, of the failure of the ruler, the situation can still be dealt with effectively and order can be re-established simply by replacing the central figure, that is the ruler himself. If the worst came to the worst, it was thinkable to contemplate a replacement of the ruler, but with the absolute preclusion of the questioning of the "li"- the determined order including a ruler with ultimate power.

It has rightly been pointed out that this method of argumentation does not leave any space for comparative constitutional analysis à la Aristotle (who was also of the axis period of Jasper). Aristotle was known to have weighed up the pro and contra of varying constitutional arrangements and therefore was, at least in this respect, ultra-modern.⁷ This analytical option was not, however, open to the Confucian paradigm. The implication that the latter paradigm is only apologetic or affirmative and incapable of visualizing human dignity (at least according to existing prejudices) would, however, deny the fundamental impetus of this paradigm. The quality control of the ruler happens for the benefit of the people, i.e. for the benefit of each single individual. The Confucian paradigm is, however, overshadowed by the insinuation of a "true order of things"; individuals are embedded in an overall order. But Confucius himself and his followers including those who engaged in the critical discussion of his ideas, were realists who often described the real state of their society with surprisingly polemical openness, and without attempts to make it look better than it actually was.

But although they had 'the people' in mind, these philosophers cannot be described as "democrats" in the modern sense of the word. Confucius, his followers and his opponents regarded themselves as "consultants": They conveyed their opinions to the ruler on behalf of the people. In their counselling of the ruler they acted as the advocates of the people.⁸ They were idealists with an acute sense for reality, who had the natural assumption that true order can only last if the well-being of the people is secured.⁹ The Confucian paradigm is very much familiar with the correlation between the misuse of power, the exploitation of people, corruption, luxury on the part of the ruling classes and the growing impoverishment of the masses (here: the peasants). This reflects a critical interrelation that seems to be completely modern: On a pre-democratic level, problems of the legitimization of power are seen against the background of social welfare. Mencius' thesis considering the elimination of a tyrant seems to fit into this picture, too. In this sense, Kim Dae-jung did not overinterpret Mencius in his recent argument with Lee Kuan Yew by seeing in him a relevant classical autochthonous theorist for today's democratic movement in East-Asia.¹⁰

⁷ See the afterword in the book by Hubert Schleichert cited in fn. 6.

⁸ See Heiner Roetz: *China und die Menschenrechte. Die Bedeutung der Tradition und die Stellung des Konfuzianismus*, in Gregor Paul und Caroline Y. Robertson-Wensauer (eds.): *Traditionelle chinesische Kultur und Menschenrechtsfrage*, Baden-Baden 1996, pp. 37-55, esp. p. 52f.

⁹ See Elbert Duncan Thomas: *Chinese Political Thought*, New York 1968², ch. VI.

¹⁰ Kim Dae-jung: *Is Culture Destiny? The Myth of Asia's Anti-Democratic Values*, in: *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 73, no. 6, 1994, pp. 189-194 (re-published in: *Democratization and Regional Cooperation in Asia*, ed. by Kim Dae-jung Peace Foundation, Seoul 1996, p. 53ff.). See also Theodore de Bary: *The Liberal Tradition in China*, Hongkong 1982.

Chaos-Management II

If the Confucian paradigm is to be seen as one based on the criticism of the ruler (that is that a well-ordered society is dependent on a well-behaved emperor who is a model character and who influences the people accordingly.), the alternative *Daoist* paradigm can be regarded as one that criticizes ruler, culture and civilization. The simple fact that a society needs morality, or even sermonizing on morality, is considered to be an expression of decadence. Morality, civilization, rulership and laws are all seen as interference with the natural course of events. It is this interference which produces chaos as it is in no way equipped to manage the imbalances which are produced. This led to the following paradoxical statement in the Daoist paradigm: "The best way to reign is not to reign". Daoists are against institutions, against laws—especially penal laws—they despise any form of action and in modern terms they reject technocracy and negate rulership. The real art of reigning is not to act. Not activity or action, for which the late follower of Confucius Xun Zi pleaded, but the praise for passivity is at the center of the argument. Not the "*li*" but the "*wuwei*" represent the guiding principle and the opposite of intended action—"non-action" that smoothly follows the undefinable *dao*.

This paradigm seems to be characterized by the idea that everything is self-regulating; controlling results from self-control, and everything happens in the smallest possible circuit: "small is beautiful".

Criticism of the ruler, therefore, does not make sense in this paradigm. Criticism of the actual system of rule rather than the quality of the one emperor or the other is of importance. The focus of the Daoist paradigm is therefore at the much more fundamental systems level, rather than the level of the practical political form of rule of the day. The abolition of civilization altogether with the system of rule is the target, which logically makes the control of the quality of the rulership superfluous.

The Daoist paradigm is based on distance from public activity, to action itself, and it is therefore a paradoxical offer for the management of the problem of public order. Taken seriously it resembles a plea for the natural life of a hermit who worships and follows *dao*. When the Daoist paradigm is used to criticize Western civilization it is usually interpreted as a protest against civilizational pathologies. This is incorrect. It should be considered as a fundamental perspective for the re-establishment of public order, even though this establishment is understood as self-regulative.

Chaos-Management III

The third perspective in chaos management, that of *Legalism* or *Legism*, is completely different. This paradigm finds fault not with the excesses of civilizational institutions but rather with their lack of efficacy. The Legalist paradigm does not focus on moral sermonizing like the Confucian paradigm, neither does it regard the family as the undeniable stronghold of collective socialization. Withdrawal from action, that is the non-action of the Daoist paradigm, holds no appeal here either. It is based on the power and efficacy of institutions and laws—especially penal laws and the threat of punishment. This threat of negative sanctions and the principle of deterrence are considered the principle means for establishing social order. Positive sanctions do not have any major significance in Legalist thought. The decisive

regulative mechanism for the co-existence of people, who are understood as potential anarchists, are sanction-imposing laws ("*fa*") and not the "*li*" of Confucius. To control "the tigers" is of utmost importance, and putting them into the necessary cage can only be achieved by institutions that threaten with sanctions and penalties.¹¹

The Legalist paradigm, carried by positivistic attitudes, supports authoritarian solutions which are applicable to all: the officials and the people. Only the emperor himself, in his absolute power (*ex auctoritate*), can enact new laws. He was, however, supposed to stay in the background and let his officials do the work, whilst he surrounded himself in the aura of non-action. This enables him to demand an explanation from his officials for a failure of his own policy and punish them severely, without drawing blame on himself: Feigned inactivity as a strategem!

In the Legalist paradigm human beings as a whole are regarded as basically evil, an attitude portrayed in its most exemplary form by the leading Legalist Han Fei Zi. Perfectibility of the human kind is unimaginable. This element of the Legalist paradigm stands in sharp contrast to the Confucian paradigm. It also differs from the writings of the teacher of Han Fei Zi, Xun Zi who, disagreeing with Confucius and Mencius, stated that human beings are evil but that influenced by institutions working as civilizational bridges (themselves artificial constructions), the development of a certain perfectibility of the human kind is comprehensible and realizable. However, according to Xun Zi institutions can only work as civilizing media if they are linked to the "*li*", that is if they are carried by moral principles. This latter attitude does not appeal to Legalism at all. The Confucian picture of man as being able to learn, open to instruction, and capable of creatively influencing his own perfectibility through activity—in fact the picture of man as a *zoon politicon*—is totally absurd for Legalism. Equally incomprehensible is the appeal for "*yi*", for rightfulness or righteousness defined by Xun Zi as "doing the right thing".

Chaos-Management IV

The *Mohist* paradigm of Mo Di (Micius) is of a completely different nature. Being universalistically orientated, it focuses on general love without status differences. Its appeal is in its combination of containing both ethical and materialistic components. The thesis is essentially that general love leads to general usefulness. To expand on this: If everybody was imbued by love, he would be useful to everybody else. A natural result of this would be social self-regulation. The paradigm is not only carried by love itself but by the combination of mutual love that manifests itself in mutual usefulness. A society that is based on this correspondence (*jian*) is quite different from a society that is strife-torn and divided (*bie*). The "*li*" orientation of the Confucian paradigm is replaced by the "*ren*" orientation. This can be described as humaneness and good-will, as kindness, magnanimity and altruism. These qualities are not regulated by traditions and standards, as in the "*li*" orientation, they have to be discovered by each human being itself. Individual effort rather than instructions leads to

¹¹ See Fu Zhengzuan: *China's Legalists. The Earliest Totalitarians and the Art of Ruling*, New York 1996.

"ren". The Mohist paradigm therefore pleads for an autonomous rather than a heterogeneous ethic. Confucius, though, had already formulated "Do as you would be done by!"¹².

The Mohist paradigm has, incidentally, a markedly critical attitude to society. Being familiar with the European history of ideas, it resembles in many ways the criticism of the 18th century physiocrats about the *ancien régime*. They strongly criticized the parasitic extravagance of the ruling classes of their time. Mo Di extended this criticism to include not only extravagant love of splendor but also the fine arts and music in particular (the epitome of art). "To have music is wrong!" Fine arts, at least, even cultural goods of any kind are not necessary for "the benefit of the people". Puritanism is therefore the order of the day!

Chaos-Management V

If "benefit" is interpreted as egoism or "possessive individualism", Yangism comes into play, and with it the paradigm of Yang Zhu. This is a *rational choice-paradigm* which was explicitly directed against the "*li*", "*ren*" and "*yi*" orientations. "Everything for myself" - "*wei wo*" - is essentially the utilitarian orientation of an egoistic "cultivation of one's own life". The Yangism paradigm should perhaps not be seen as a serious leading alternative for the creation of public order as it represented an outsider position. Public order never was an argument in this purely hedonistic line of thought. Nevertheless, it represents a very interesting orientation in an environment that as a rule conveyed totally different attitudes and alternatives ("*li*", "*ren*", "*yi*", "*fa*"). Yangism stands in stark contrast to what is generally considered to be the core of the Chinese tradition.

3.4 Contradictions and Complementarities

These five paradigmatic perspectives are by no means a complete list of the different schools of thought in classical Chinese philosophy. However just this brief list of the most essential paradigms indicates the remarkable broad-ranging diversity. Both reflection on and rejection of tradition, as well as moderate discontinuity of tradition and the creation of new practical social orientations are present. Moral sermonizing stands side by side with moral criticism and appeals for activity run alongside reasoning for non-action. Institutions are highly praised and totally condemned. Rulership is criticized, but is on the other hand also highly esteemed. Apart from the general criticism of rulership, heavy and personal criticism of individual rulers is to be found. There are arguments against parasitic splendor (Mo Di) and on the other hand there is some sense for affluence (Xun Zi). Pleas for heterogeneous ethics can be found alongside arguments for autonomous ethics. Diversity is not lacking though neither is polemical criticism. Especially remarkable is the openness with which all this criticism is put forth reciprocally.

However all these discourses are not arguments for a "pluralistic society". Some positions (the Confucian, the Daoist and the Mohist paradigm) give the feeling that harmony, community and self-regulation on the foundation of "*li*", "*ren*" and "*yi*" are fixed points in a desired order. None of the accounts include any hint of an open and pluralistic playground for

¹²Confucius: *Gespräche des Meisters Kung (Lun Yü)*, ed. by Ernst Schwarz, München 1994⁶, p. 108 (talk XV.23).

political or social action. In Legalism "plurality", if the term can be applied here at all, is defined as the total of malice and chaos that has always been understood as something to be stemmed and controlled and not as something of intrinsic value. The problem of order in Yangism evaporates in self-satisfying hedonism. It would not be wrong to regard the aforementioned positions as autocratic/oligarchic/gerontocratic and furthermore as patriarchal.

All these positions, perhaps with the exception of Yangism, have one thing in common. They all recognize the difference between high and low, between nobility and people, whereby the ordinary people take a fourth place in the hierarchy and are judged as being rather stupid. But they have to be treated well! Neither in classical Chinese philosophy nor in reality was there ever any form of democracy in the sense of functioning institutionalized procedures of participation, control, voting apparatus and elections in the public space, all of which were present in the oligarchic Greek democracy of the very same period. This fact corresponds to those interpretations which rightly stress the critical potential in Chinese thought and especially the potential links which could make for a modern political community. It must be pointed out that the European political and philosophical development had until the last two and a half centuries little space either for pluralist-democratic thinking (in the modern sense of the phrase) and/or for democratic constitutionalism.

3.5 The Narrowing of the Philosophical Discourse

In the period between the second century BC and the 2nd century AD the previously mentioned contradictory positions amalgamated into "Neo-Confucianism". This was essentially the undoing of classical Chinese philosophy and of the paradigms of Confucianism, Daoism and Legalism.¹³ A cosmologically focused state doctrine was the outcome of this amalgamation. This was demonstrated by Dong Zongshu (179-104), with heaven at the top, the mandate of heaven being bestowed on the ruler (the emperor), the officials acting to carry out his will and finally the people at the bottom of everything. The interweaving of this Neo-Confucianism with Daoist and Buddhist ideas only took place in the subsequent centuries. An image of the world, the society and the human being was created in which everything was placed in a hierarchical scale: nature, heaven, ruler, people, individual. This can be perceived as a revival either of cosmocentric thought or as sociomorphic and/or anthropomorphic thinking as the projections vary from cosmos to the individual and vice versa. Everything is connected to everything else, "inter-related", in a strictly hierarchical order.¹⁴ This tendency led to the loss of paradigmatic or positioned differentiations typical in classical Chinese thought. However, a new form of critical questioning of the Confucian doctrine of the state via criticism of the ruler is observable, albeit intermitantly. For instance the writings of Bao Jingyan in the third and fourth centuries AD. His position, however, was later overrun by representatives of the classical Neo-Confucianist like Zhu Xi (1130-1200).

¹³ See Wolfgang Ommerborn and Peter Weber-Schäfer, op. cit. (fn. 6).

¹⁴ John Henderson: *The Development and Decline of Chinese Cosmology*, New York 1984, in this connection speaks of "correlative thinking". On the cosmological thought of socio-morphic or anthropomorphic versions in pre-philosophical documents or early documents of philosophy see still Ernst Topitsch: *Vom Ursprung und Ende der Metaphysik*, Wien 1958.

3.6 Conclusions

Looking back, what can be gained for the ongoing cultural debate from these observations ?

1. It seems to be questionable to understand civilizations as homogenous and closed. Closer examination, particularly of Chinese philosophy, indicates diversity differentiation, and amazingly contradictory positions. It documents consistent critique of tradition, a fact (self-critique) which is known to have paved the way for the Modern Age in Europe.

2. Even if, as has been the case in China, diversity has been degraded to relative one-sidedness which remained more or less determining until the middle of the 19th century, it is always useful to remember the diversity which existed previously. This diversity documents early signs of Enlightenment in the European sense of the term. Chinese society, at least its intellectual leaders, enlightened themselves through the debate between different schools of thought. Thus the impetus of Enlightenment does not have to be imported from outside as has often mistakenly been thought in China. In this regard China can easily go back to its own cultural inheritance.

3. With reconstructive intentions, links are to be found right across the range of paradigms which are relevant to the current debate. One would be the criticism of ruler and rulership; another the Legalist idea of a *generally* valid law; a third would be the egalitarian anthropology based on the equality of human beings (as in Mencius and Xun Zi); a fourth would be the idea of autonomous action and judgement even in the presence of one's superiors; another would be the social-utilitarian reason of state with its responsibility to act on behalf of the good of the general public; political commitment to morality *and* utility; and finally the golden rule taken from the term "*ren*": reciprocity. This is incidentally a rule which is valid irrelevant of tradition, status and context.

In relation to the idea of pluralistic society there could be a link to the concept of the dignity of individuals, simply on account of their being human. Another link could be the idea that the exercise of power is bound to respect individual dignity and that, therefore, the privilege of arbitrary patronage does not exist. Legitimate emotional and intellectual reservations exist in respect not only to state measures but also explicitly with regard to the arch-Confucian sphere of respect—the family (*xiao*) and with respect to the loyalty of officials to their ruler (*zhong*).

Special emphasis should be placed on the fact that these ideas are not foreign transplants, they are indigenous Chinese produce. There were no contacts with the world outside China during the axis period. It can, therefore, be stated with complete justification that there are sufficient though not exhaustive links in classical Chinese philosophy, which make a modern understanding of human rights possible. They certainly did not spring from a corresponding culture-genetic predisposition (which Europe did not have either), rather they are the result of China's very own internal philosophical debates.¹⁵

¹⁵ Esp. informative recently Gregor Paul and Caroline Y. Robertson-Wensauer (eds.), op. cit. (fn. 8); Michael C. Davis (ed.): *Human Rights and Chinese Values. Legal, Philosophical, and Political Perspectives*, Oxford 1995; Theodore de Bary and Tu Weiming (eds.): *Confucianism and Human Rights*, New York 1998, as well as Thomas A. Metzger: *Mit Zweifeln des Westens. Die Chinesen*

This is *and remains* an intellectual asset which will sooner or later provoke relevant memories of the past, something which is particularly probable under conditions of emerging modernity. Such development should be politically accepted in modernizing China, it should even be publicly encouraged. Seen from the point of view of political leaders, there are currently good reasons to prevent this from happening in China. These are reasons which may be justifiable from a Legalistic point of view, but they are also reasons which were brilliantly and thoroughly criticized by the internal Chinese debate two and a half thousand years ago.

glauben an eine universale Moral, in: Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Dec. 29, 1993. See now also Gregor Paul: *Wai ru nei fa: nach außen konfuzianisch, innerlich legalistisch. Oder: Theorie und Schein der Humanität und inhumane Wirklichkeit*, in Gregor Paul (ed.) *Die Menschenrechtsfrage. Diskussion über China - Dialog mit China*, Göttingen 1998, pp. 39-61.

With regard to the concept of human rights, Sven-Uwe Müller in his recent study *Konzeptionen der Menschenrechte im China des 20. Jahrhunderts*, Hamburg 1997, particularly elaborated the difference between China ("orientation towards collective goods"?) and the West ("orientation towards the protection of rights"?). However, the consideration of the contradictory internal Chinese debates remains inadequate, and the fact that the "Western paradigm" represents the result of lengthy political conflicts and that present constitutional regulations have only been achieved after such conflicts is not analyzed.

4. The Quest for Innovation Islam and the Challenges of Pluralism

All traditional cultures face the difficulty of having to tackle an ever more pluralistic world. As a result, the obstinacy of the respective cultures comes into conflict with the increasing plurality of life styles and values. There are two ways of solving this conflict: defense or innovation. In the first case, the obstinacy of the respective culture will be intensified; traditionalism and orthodoxy prevail. The second case will lead to renewal, through the adaptation of identity to meet the requirements of new circumstances and challenges.

The Islamic world, particularly, is increasingly confronted with this problem.

4.1 The Current Situation

For decades dramatic processes of social and economic differentiation have been affecting the Islamic region. Here, as in every corner of the world, social mobilization has penetrated the cultural and political spheres, and has politicized societies. However, in contrast to East Asia, transformation processes have so far mostly ended in a development crisis, which does not allow for the broad-based, upward social mobility to the extent expected in cases of successful socio-economic development. Social change within a deepening development crisis, however, is not a favorable precondition for appreciating the pluralization of value orientation. On the contrary: such conditions tend to cause defensiveness against overdue cultural innovations, which is particularly striking when the transformation touches all areas of life and when upward mobility-with the exception of a small circle of careerists and *nouveaux riches*-seems to be blocked completely.¹ In this case, understandably, defensiveness is not only discernible in the lower classes, but also in the middle classes. The reason for this being that the middle classes tend to be much more socially mobile, and are therefore frustrated by the prevailing circumstances. It is as a result of this situation that the middle class also belong to the social strata from which the fundamentalists recruit.

This situation is particularly characteristic of many Arabic-Islamic societies (critically developed up to the actual civil war in Algeria, becoming critical in Egypt), where broad Islamic movements have become active and have taken on much greater importance than the overly vocal militant wings. Such movements can by no means be reduced to a common denominator since they are characterized by different features: gaining political power by instrumentalizing religion, activating the religious community for reasons of solidarity, revitalizing one's own traditional values, struggling against the Western "devil", or a mixture of these elements. Under these circumstances pluralism of values will, of course, not be highly appreciated. Rather, such pluralism is usually understood as the core problem, i.e. as

¹ See Bassam Tibi: *Die Krise des modernen Islam. Eine vorindustrielle Kultur im wissenschaftlich-technischen Zeitalter*, Frankfurt a.M. 1991; id.: *Der Islam und das Problem der kulturellen Bewältigung sozialen Wandels*, Frankfurt a.M. 1985.

an expression of cultural decadence and thus a repetition of pre-Islamic "ignorance" and moral rottenness (*jahiliyya*) but not as a productive "asset".²

The problems which give rise to the actual development crisis-the denial of pluralism within an environment of growing social mobilization and loss of economic substance-are, however, not only caused by present circumstances. This denial is, taking up a term by Arkoun, also based on the "hegemonic Islamic reason"³, i.e. on a particular self-image of Islam that has been predominant not only recently but has deep historical roots and still seems to appeal to the masses.

What is this Islamic self-image all about? Why is the bridging between Islam and a positively appreciated pluralism of values so complicated?

4.2 The Basic Problem

Islam is substantially founded upon the Koran, "the Text", and this text is believed to have been conveyed, by the revelation of God, to the prophet Mohammed. Therefore the Koran, correctly, is often referred to as inverbation of God or "scripturizing" of God.⁴ As many scientists in the field of Islam have stated, this premise has considerable implications: The resulting image of the world, of society and of man are "theonomous and community-oriented". Following a prevailing Islamic self-conception: there exists a revealed divine right whose scope comprises all social and human spheres (*sharia*) and to which the community of the believers (*umma*) has to submit. The claim is comprehensive and the corresponding thinking holistic, especially with regard to "the text" and to the messages emerging from the words and acts of the prophet (*hadithe*). If this thinking is buttressed by power and strives to realize "the rule of God" as, for example, defined by Maududi (*hakimiyyat Allah*), it tends more or less to totalitarianism that is the opposite model of pluralism of values.⁵

So in the first place, at least with regard to the ideal-type of hegemonic Islamic reason, neither the individual per se or the plurality of individuals with their different mentalities, identities and interests, nor individual subjects or separate groupings are able to actively use the autonomous power of definition. It is rather the collective, the *umma*, guided by and oriented towards revelation, that becomes the scene of sharia-abiding believing, thinking and acting. Modifying the term 'reason of state', in this connection one could speak of the "reason

² An informative monograph in this connection is Gilles Kepel: *Der Prophet und der Pharao. Das Beispiel Ägypten. Die Entwicklung des muslimischen Extremismus*, München 1995.

³ Mohammed Arkoun: *Pour une critique de la raison islamique*, Paris 1984; id.: *Rethinking Islam*, Boulder 1994.

⁴ Jacques Berque: *Der Koran neu gelesen*, Frankfurt a.M. 1996.

⁵ Bassam Tibi has insisted on this fact for years. See recently by this author: *Der religiöse Fundamentalismus im Übergang zum 21. Jahrhundert*, Mannheim 1995. On some problems see Angelika Hartmann: *Der islamische "Fundamentalismus". Wahrnehmung und Realität einer neuen Entwicklung im Islam*, in: *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, no. 28, 1997, pp. 3-13 as well as Asad Abukhalil: *The Incoherence of Islamic Fundamentalism. Arab Islamic Thought at the End of the 20th Century*, in: *Middle East Journal*, vol. 48, no. 4, 1994, pp. 677-694.

of religion"⁶ giving comprehensive orientation and defining a morally-binding distinction between the permissible and the forbidden.⁷

Although this hegemonic Islamic self-image, which today is often elaborated with apologetic intention but also referred to by critics, has prevailed during the history of Islam it has not remained undisputed. However those who interpreted the above-mentioned orientation less rigidly and who, aside from revelation, assigned great importance or even a special position to human reason, remained, irrespective of their transitional historic or current prominence, peripheral figures which were never particularly successful against a power monopolizing orthodoxy, especially when such orthodoxy utilized theological reasoning for political purposes. (Sometimes dissenting movements were quite prepared to buttress their position politically, as, for example, in the case of the "rationalist" Mu'tazilites.⁸)

In other words, the specific interpretation of Islam became hegemonic because the history of alternative-rationalist elaborations, from Mu'tazilites through Averroes and from the late 19th and early 20th centuries up to the present day, has remained a history of failures.⁹ This history is tinged with tragedy; starting from the premises of a theonomous and community-oriented understanding of Islam, diverging opinions, new interpretations, or even attempts at modern, or critical interpretation of the Koran were almost instinctively reproached for apostasy: endangering life and limb of the dissenters. Corresponding processes in the past and present refer to the vicious circle which Fatema Mernissi described as the "paradigm of heresy": Assuming the correct sharia-abiding interpretation and reassured by hegemonic-Islamic reason, diverging interpretations are defined as heresy or apostasy. Thus an open controversial dispute is prevented, and the advocates of rationalist positions find themselves exposed to mental and physical persecution.¹⁰

Therefore, it is logical that the theonomous and community-oriented line, as well as the corresponding fight against an alternative (i.e. more rationalist interpretations), contributed substantially to the "essentializing" of Islam.¹¹ In this connection "essentializing" means to be committed to a hypostatized "reason of religion" and its wide-ranging consequences. Furthermore, it means to think in terms of a closed, as opposed to an open society; to be oriented collectivistically, not individually; to obey the God-given order and thus to have a strong sense of duty rather than a concern with the rights of the individual; to start from the sovereignty of God and to be skeptical (possibly to the point of denial) about the idea of the "sovereignty of the people"; to understand plurality of values as an expression of moral

⁶ Martin Forstner: *Inhalt und Begründung der Allgemeinen Islamischen Menschenrechtserklärung*, in Johannes Hoffmann (ed.): *Begründung von Menschenrechten aus Sicht unterschiedlicher Kulturen*, vol. 1, Frankfurt a.M. 1991, pp. 249-273, esp. p. 269. See also Seyyed Hossein Nasr: *Der Islam*, in Arvind Sharma (ed.): *Innenansicht der großen Religionen*, Frankfurt a.M. 1997, pp. 387-538; id.: *Ideal und Wirklichkeit des Islam*, München 1993.

⁷ An instructive insight into the dimensions and diversity of the permissible and the impermissible is given by Youssef Qaradawi: *Le licite et l'illicite en islam*, Paris 1992³.

⁸ With regard to this, see Fatema Mernissi: *Die Angst vor der Moderne. Frauen und Moderne zwischen Islam und Demokratie*, Hamburg 1992, p. 49 ff.

⁹ Bassam Tibi: *Der wahre Imam. Der Islam von Mohammed bis zur Gegenwart*, München 1996.

¹⁰ Phrased like this in an account of a lecture by Fatema Mernissi, published in: *Civil Society* (Cairo), vol. 3, no. 31, October 1994, p. 13.

¹¹ On this see Aziz Al-Azmeh: *Die Islamisierung des Islam*, Frankfurt a.M. 1996. On the theological and practical significance of this fact see Malika Zeghal: *Gardiens de l'Islam. Les oulémas d'Al-Azhar dans l'Egypte contemporaine*, Paris 1996.

confusion, not as an inevitable result of a pluralizing society and world. So "essentialized Islam" is missing the mental and, in particular, institutional safety nets for real plurality. Starting from the "pure", i.e. the hegemonic doctrine, the denial or rejection of plurality at worst turns into persecution. Where this does not happen, pragmatic insight and practical wisdom may prevail. But from the theonomous and community-oriented point of view, such schools of thought and behavior are, on principle, subject to criticism. This is due to the view that they are opportunistic and not to be reconciled with Islamic law.

However, are there any prospects for bridging the gap between the cultural heritage of Islam and the requirements of modern plurality in a constructive way?

4.3 Starting Points for a Productive Treatment of Plurality

In the Islamic region the question arises as to how, considering its history and its burden resulting from cultural preconditioning, a productive relation to modernity and one of its main characteristics-plurality-can be created. The implied issue is not that of denying one's own cultural origin, which would just lead to an abstract confrontation of a new orientation with the predominant historical-cultural legacy; rather it is a matter of building a mental and emotional bridge between this historical legacy and the requirements of modernity. In doing so, the following points may be of some help:

1. Modifying a consideration by al-Azm, one could say: In view of the "pure doctrine", bridge-building between Islam and plurality, particularly between Islam and pluralism of values, is in principle impossible, but in practice feasible.¹² In spite of all orientation to the one "text" as the heart of Islamic heritage, controversial interpretations have been taken place since the 7th century, which, though not openly pluralist with regard to values, could be defined as "pluralist" within their own environment. While essentialized Islam is perceived to be monolithic, especially with respect to pointedly fundamentalist positions, the history of Islam (as, by the way, any other cultural history) has always been characterized by disputes, controversial opinions in theology and law, even by schisms and related deep and often militant antagonisms. Furthermore Islam from its very beginning has been a multifaceted phenomenon including explicitly formulated, conflicting and, often enough, belligerent positions all of which have relied on, and remain reliant upon, justification through the same documents: Sunna, Shi'ah, sufism and other approaches to the document regarded as revealed disclose that even a religion like Islam, which ideally sees itself as a unity (one "umma"), cannot escape pluralist interpretation.¹³ Understanding this not only as a historic fact but realizing it on principle, i.e. as theologically inescapable, may be an important prerequisite for a productive relationship to pluralism. If its own basis, the divine revelation conveying itself by means of the Arabic language, can only be comprehended with the help of pluralistic and sometimes extremely controversial interpretations, and if this fact could be accepted without any reservations or could even be appreciated positively, then plurality

¹² Sadik J. Al-Azm: *Is Islam Secularizable?*, in: *Jahrbuch für Philosophie des Forschungsinstituts für Philosophie Hannover*, vol. 7, Wien 1996, pp. 15-24. See by the same author: *Unbehagen in der Moderne. Aufklärung im Islam*, Frankfurt a.M. 1993; *Aufklärung im Orient?*, in: *Frankfurter Rundschau* 18/4/1995.

¹³ Informative in this connection is Tilman Nagel: *Staat und Glaubensgemeinschaft im Islam. Geschichte der politischen Ordnungsvorstellungen der Muslime*, 2 vols., München 1981.

could also become a self-evident point of reference for less fundamental aspects of human existence and coexistence.

2. Al-Azm asked whether Islam was "secularizable" and answered (as referred to above): dogmatically no, historically yes. Considering the historic yes, he (unlike the above-mentioned first point) did not refer to the controversial plurality within Islamic religion but to the fact that in reality most Islamic societies have gone through a secularization process which for dogmatic reasons is actually inadmissible. Al-Azm calls that process to be gradual and creeping: involving the governmental and legal system, the school system, the armed forces as well as other social spheres. The radical break which the Turkish leader Atatürk pushed through in 1924 with regard to a general secularization of Turkey following France as the laicist model, is atypical rather than representative of the Islamic world. If, however, there were no gradual and creeping secularization, present Islamist movements would be incomprehensible; without far-reaching secularization trends the Islamist accusation of *jahiliyya*, of moral decay of existant Islamic societies, would be completely unfounded. Thus, actual secularization and Islamist protest against this process go hand in hand-a fact which furnishes proof of Al-Azm's above quoted thesis.

3. If the possibility is accepted that during Islamic history the predominant patterns of thought on Islamic reason-called *hegemonic* reason by Arkoun-were aligned with the respective power holders, i.e. with the centralized power and its hegemonic demands, then the understanding of this fact and the critique of such a power-related reason could become another starting point for coping with plurality productively. If analyzed critically, the dogmatic and reductionist narrowmindedness of conventional Islamic reason (orthodoxy) would become apparent; as well as the fact that the current discourse on the Koran unfolded its own semantic power by adjusting itself to the reason of religion and eliminating imaginable alternatives, though some of these alternatives were actually temporarily realized. Above all, the problematic sacralization of sharia and the essentialist denotations attributed to it would become transparent if the historical circumstances and existential experiences which gave rise to sharia were retrospectively disregarded.¹⁴

4. Since the previously mentioned problem-the critique of Islamic reason *within* the Islamic religion-has, during the history of Islam, been virulent at times, "rational" positions that remained marginal during this history would have to be "re-discovered" or at least re-activated for current use as historical evidence for alternative interpretations. This process would be of some importance, even though it can be assumed that the positions called *rational* within the debate on Islam are mostly embedded in theonomous and community-oriented lines of reasoning, i.e. their advocates were not radical rationalists (in today's sense). Furthermore these rationalists, of course, were concerned about abiding by Islamic law, about a decent and "truly Islamic society" as a substantive concept; they were not concerned about, or dealing with, plurality. In this school of thought, however, reason did play a more prominent role than before and afterwards in orthodoxy.

The original group of "philosophers of reason" (for the grounds just mentioned the term should only be used very carefully) included: al-Farabi, Avicenna, Averroes, definitely in

¹⁴ So explicitly the ideology-critical perspective submitted by Arkoun (see fn. 3).

tendency and without the previously stated reservation Ibn Khaldun; centuries later al-Tahtawi, al-Afghani, M. Abduh, M. R. Rida-and outside the Arabic-Islamic region in South Asia: M. Iqbal.¹⁵ These 'philosophers' can be characterized in the same way that A. Schimmel characterized a group of Cairo modernists linked to the journal "Manar" (so-called Manar-group): "Their message has been that Islam with no serious problems is able to adjust to modern civilization; all problems could be solved by newly interpreting Koran and tradition."¹⁶

5. Directly connected to point four, those positions which dare to face the conceptual bridging of modernity and Islam are of special help. Obviously this bridging can only succeed after having previously criticized the hegemonic Islamic reason in Arkoun's sense and, more explicitly, as a result of a detailed critique of those elements of sharia which are not consistent with the requirements of the modern age. Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im presented such a critical examination of sharia¹⁷ and understands such critique as an advocacy for "Islamic reformation". He considers a critical investigation of sharia as imperative because, on the one hand, sharia first took shape-a different conception is hardly possible-under very specific historical circumstances, which nevertheless had powerful, long-term political effects. On the other hand, a critical debate is regarded as overdue because essential orientations contained in sharia no longer correspond to the existential life experience of today's people as, for example, the assumption of gender inequality in legal and other respects, doubtful legal procedures, especially in Islamic criminal law, a missing constitutionalist orientation which prevents the bridging from Islam to the rule of law, discrimination of people who are not Muslims within Islamic societies, further incompatibility of principles of sharia and modern international law, the latter being based on a general renunciation of violence and the aim of the support of fundamental freedoms and human rights.

Considering these sensitive points, the question arises whether Islam, and in particular sharia, can be brought together with modern legal developments. Can Islam be brought into agreement with a public order founded on separation of powers? And can fundamental freedoms as, for instance, the freedom of religion in Islam be imagined as a basic value at all? An-Na'im and other authors emphasize that, from the point of view of traditional, established, orthodox sharia, such values are not conceivable at all, they even have to be condemned. And they stress that, without substantial self-criticism directed towards a conceptual reorientation, a correspondence or congruence between modern legal principles and Islam is inconceivable.

¹⁵ See the respective essays in *Companion Encyclopedia of Asian Philosophy*, ed. by Brian Carr and Indira Mahalingam, London 1997, part VI. See also Anke von Kügelgen: *Averroes und die islamische Moderne. Ansätze zu einer Neubegründung des Rationalismus im Islam*, Leiden 1994.

¹⁶ Annemarie Schimmel: *Der Islam. Eine Einführung*, Stuttgart 1990, p. 119.

¹⁷ Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im: *Toward an Islamic Reformation. Civil Liberties, Human Rights and International Law*, Syracuse 1990. Other authors prominent in the Arabic world are introduced in detail in the informative book by Lorenz Müller: *Islam und Menschenrechte. Sunnitische Muslime zwischen Islamismus, Säkularismus und Modernismus*, Hamburg 1996. See Rotraud Wielandt: *Menschenwürde und Freiheit in der Reflexion zeitgenössischer muslimischer Denker*, in Johannes Schwartländer (ed.): *Freiheit der Religion. Christentum und Islam unter dem Anspruch der Menschenrechte*, Mainz 1993, pp. 179-209 as well.

In other words: A modern Islamic society is inconceivable without taking account of the principles of modern constitutionalism.¹⁸ Gender inequality can no longer be justified rationally (if there have ever been rational reasons). In pluralizing societies, refusing those people who do not follow one's own religion, their basic rights amounts to an invitation to civil war. Criminal law has to correspond to the principles of humanity. And relations to other states and societies or cultural regions have to be regulated in accordance with modern requirements of coexistence; thus they *on principle* have to start from prohibition of violence; and militant religious proselytizing has to be renounced on principle. All these concrete orientations are founded on basic human rights, the respect for and support of which become a matter of national and international peace. Where sharia contradicts them-An-Na'im assumes this for the points above-mentioned-fundamental self-criticism is both necessary and overdue.¹⁹

6. Striving for an appropriate theology of reform aiming at an "Islamic reformation", An-Na'im refers to the fact that within the Koran, Mecca-texts differ from Medina-texts, however not because they had been revealed in different places and at different times, but mainly because the messages were conveyed to a different audience.²⁰ Mecca-texts were intended for people in general; those from Medina, articulated after the exodus from Mecca (*hidschra*), especially for believers who felt themselves to be in dire straits. Therefore, Mecca-texts are more cosmopolitan, while Medina-texts stress the difference between inside and outside, between believers and non-believers, between *umma* and the rest of the world. They were directed towards the mobilization of inner loyalty and the defence against enemies from outside. Therefore, the historical context has to be considered; the very reason that sharia cannot be interpreted as the direct and invariable expression of divine will. However such contexts change, thus requiring new interpretations for a spiritually alive Islam.

For this, all attempts that work out the historicity and contextuality of the "text" applying modern linguistic and deconstructivist methods could be useful.²¹ In view of the text-fixation and text-weighting of Islamic culture, in particular as far as the revelation is concerned, such methodical endeavors have often been interpreted as a pernicious provocation. Such modern scientific analysis of the text of Koran, however, does not have to lead to its dissolution; it may even result in a concentration of the very religious content of Islam. A parallel can be drawn to such approaches which comprehend the Bible in all its historicity and context. Dealing with the "text" in this way, to a certain extent aims at the clearing of

¹⁸ These problems are instructively handled also by Gudrun Krämer: *Islam, Menschenrechte und Demokratie*, in Albrecht Zunkler (ed.): *Weltordnung oder Chaos? Beiträge zur internationalen Politik*, Baden-Baden 1993, pp. 331-346. See also Iyad Sadek Haddad: *Islamists and the Challenge of Pluralism*, Washington 1995 (series: *Occasional Papers* of the Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, Georgetown University).

¹⁹ All substantial points mentioned are fully discussed in the book by An-Na'im cited in fn. 17.

On the interesting attempt to convey an insight into Islam facing modernity in Indonesia, see Robert William Hefner: *Islamische Toleranz. Der Kampf um eine pluralistische Ethik im heutigen Indonesien*, in Peter Berger (ed.): *Die Grenzen der Gemeinschaft*, Gütersloh 1997, pp. 399-446.

²⁰ With regard to this point, An-Na'im follows his teacher Moahmoud Mohamed Taha: *The Second Message of Islam*, Syracuse 1987. Owing to his theses, Taha had been accused of apostasy in Sudan and was executed in 1985-a case in point for the above-cited paradigm of heresy by Mernissi.

²¹ See the exemplary book by Muhammed Abed al-Jabri: *Introduction à la critique de la raison arabe*, Paris 1994, and on this author Michael Gaebel: *Von der Kritik des arabischen Denkens zum panarabischen Aufbruch*, Berlin 1995.

historical burdens, at the differentiation between the essence or core on the one hand and the time-bound surface on the other hand. It does not disgrace the text by explaining its sacralization as a consequence of political instrumentalization. What it underlines especially, is the fact that the text had been revealed under specific circumstances in a concrete language to a particular audience. It is necessary to reflect on these circumstances when trying to make clear the difference between the accidental meaning of a statement and its underlying idea.

However, such a text-critique hits a sensitive point in the self-image of the *umma*, which can be seen in the reactions to respective attempts. Quite prominent is the case of Abu Zaid, a Muslim author, whose exact aim is historicizing and contextualizing or, as it is called today, deconstructing the text, e.g. the Koran.²² The defensiveness against, and the persecution of authors like Abu Zaid, show that the "inverbation of God", as it supposedly took place in the Koran, induces a scripturalist interpretation and, thus, causes the sacralization of the text and consequently the fight against and denial of all non-scripturalist interpretations.

7. An-Na'im starts from the position that a strictly defined secularism will not have any chance in Islamic societies because people of this cultural area still identify with Islam to a considerable degree. According to his understanding, the bridging between Islam and modernity is therefore a matter of "*Islamic reformation*", not of secularization. Nevertheless, there are, of course, secularist positions stating-as Fuad Zakariya puts it-that secularization is a necessity dictated by reason for every modern society, and a political and social necessity for the current Islamic society:²³ While religions aspire to universality, for politics diversity is essential. It is the task of politics to make room for multifaceted opinions and to organize them in a democratic way. So mingling politics and religion inevitably leads to a dead end: Religious ideals are poisoned and corrupted by politics, and vice versa; religion is not capable of regulating a world dominated by secular mechanisms. Moreover, it becomes apparent that freedom and democracy prosper much better under a secular government than under a religious one, because a religious government makes it easy for power-holders to misuse the sacred for justifying their actions, for concealing their errors by pretending infallibility. "As soon as politics pretends that absolute truth is its very basis, elementary human rights, in the first line, the freedom of belief and the freedom of thought, are suspended, if not liquidated." Secularization refuses to make man to a God or to an unfailing

²² Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid: *Islam und Politik. Kritik des religiösen Diskurses*, Frankfurt a.M. 1996. On throwing light on Abu Zaid's methodical efforts as well as the political and human consequences, see Navid Kermani: *Offenbarung als Kommunikation*, Frankfurt a.M. 1996. See also my talk with Abu Zaid: *Die islamische Welt und die Moderne*, published in: *Entwicklung - Kulturen - Frieden. Visionen für eine neue Weltordnung*, ed. by Stiftung Entwicklung und Frieden, Bonn 1996, pp. 21-36.

On the instrumentalization of the discourse on Islam by the orthodoxy for the purposes of political control and in particular the case of Abu Zaid, see now Rotraud Wielandt: *Wurzeln der Schwierigkeit innerislamischen Gesprächs über neue hermeneutische Zugänge zum Korantext*, in Stefan Wild (ed.): *The Qur'an as Text*, Leiden 1996, pp. 257-282.

Lorenz Müller, op.cit. (fn.17), pp. 227-314, reports about a further attempt of reinterpreting Koran and Islamic tradition in a way congenial to Abu Zaid: the work of Muhammad Shahrur.

²³ Fuad Zakariya: *Säkularisierung - eine historische Notwendigkeit*, in Michael Lüders (ed.): *Der Islam im Aufbruch? Perspektiven der arabischen Welt*, München 1992, pp. 228-245. The following quotations are drawn from this article. See also id.: *Laïcité ou islamisme. Les arabes à l'heure du choix*, Paris 1989. For other secularist positions (though with certain reservations) see Lorenz Müller, op.cit. (fn. 17), pp. 213-235, discussing especially the work of Muhammad Said al-Ashmawi.

being. It realizes the limits of human reason and knows of the inadequacy of political and social systems. Being aware of this inadequacy, it looks for possible improvements and reforms, and thus strives for a more just and human world. "To the contrary the doctrines of those who fight against secularization have a completely different denominator: a deep contempt of man." For Islamists the original sin in politics consists in legitimizing the autonomy of man's or people's political authority. This contempt of the people, this hatred for democracy find their institutional expression in the principle of consultation (*shura*): Consultation replaces democracy. One has, however, to bear in mind that consultation is by no means binding, it lies in the sovereign's discretion, and it functions from top down, not from bottom up; i.e. it is not democratically legitimized.

One could add to this reasoning: Secularization does not-unlike the frequent assumption-necessarily have to be identified with the French experience of exaggerated laicism. Secularization in the Islamic region could take the German experience as an example, or rather the Scandinavian or the British one (in the latter cases even state churches exist!). If understanding really existing secular states as empirical point of reference, then the pernicious image of the "ungodly secular state", which was produced by Islamists, disappears. States, where the basic right of the freedom of religion prevails and a strict separation between state and religion does *not* exist (what actually exists is functional differentiation including overlaps), could inspire modern solutions in the Islamic region. This, of course, calls for taking note of the variability of existant secular states.

4.4 Self-blockade by Fighting the West

Corresponding constructive points of reference are obvious, in particular the fact that Western societies were once in a similar situation. Additionally, in these societies-in contrast to the experiences during early Christianity in the Middle East-politics, state and religion were mixed up; religion was used for state purposes. A secularization movement would not have been necessary in the West if there had not previously been a symbiosis between politics and religion. Furthermore the history of the Western constitutional state would not have been as difficult, lengthy, and even painful, if the freedom of religion had been regarded from the very beginning as a natural basic right in the Western-Christian culture.²⁴ This was not, however, the case, particularly in early modern age: *Cuius regio, eius religio*-was the war-prone key word before secularization started! Essential lessons could be learned from a broad range of Western experiences, -e.g. the political instrumentalization of religion, religious wars, constitutional struggles for fundamental freedoms and rights, the sense of tolerance generalizing slowly despite still incompatible ideological positions-such as, for example, the inevitability of pluralism in the modern world; institutional and procedural arrangements of conflict regulation as a medium of conflict management taking into consideration substantial ideological clashes; overlaps and mixed organizational schemes that neither embody the rule of God nor a pure laicist state etc.

It is understandable why such a positive orientation to Western experiences is currently absent in the Islamic region, although such ignorance is quite detrimental. Western culture

²⁴ See now the essays in: *Entstehen und Wandel verfassungsrechtlichen Denkens*, suppl. 11 of *Der Staat*, Berlin 1996.

has long been experienced as the starting point for cultural marginalization. Western programmes in the guise of marxism, socialism, the post-colonial secular state, nationalism and diverse doctrines of development caused Islamic societies to maneuver themselves into a blind alley-this is at least their own (though problematic) self-perception. Besides, processes of development which are claimed in the Islamic world to be simply repeating the European experience (which is not true) have not succeeded: The gap between the poor and the wealthy increases; cleptocratism and clientelism spread; authoritarianism and despotism characterize political regimes. Moreover, the West is perceived with its pathologies, but not with the life chances it offers to most people.

Thus, the West, absolutely understandably if so perceived, provokes defensiveness: Why then adopt modern methods of cognition promoted in the West today, such as historizing, contextualizing and deconstructivist analytical approaches? Do such approaches not suggest themselves as mental poison, as a further contribution to *jahiliyya*, or moral decay?

Superficially, it may be the case. Some findings, however, are inescapable: Islam itself has *nolens volens* created a plurality of interpretations to the point of schism; Islamic societies, too, are subject to an irreversable process of social mobilization, i.e. socio-economic and socio-cultural pluralization; and isolating oneself against the influence of a pluralizing world, not only in the West but also in the Far East, is no longer possible. So, there is no alternative for the Islamic world than to face the challenge, i.e. to find appropriate forms of self-articulation and corresponding institutional arrangements for conflict regulation in ever more pluralistic societies.²⁵ In doing so, historical experience will repeat itself: progress and retrogression, gradual changes and sudden breaks, non-violence and militant behavior will exist side by side. Finally the point will be to face the civilizing task in a way that it finally results in a humane orientation.²⁶ Simply put: monopolistic claims of whatever kind, fighting, and excluding plurality, will not be of help to Islamic civilization.

5. Homelessness vs. Public Order Inquiries on Buddhism

²⁵ A wide survey of the pertinent discussions is presented in Andreas Meier: *Der politische Auftrag des Islam. Programme und Kritik zwischen Fundamentalismus und Reformen. Originalstimmen aus der islamischen Welt*, Wuppertal 1994; Gudrun Krämer: *Islam, shura und Demokratie*, Hamburg: Habilitation Thesis 1993; Lorenz Müller, op.cit. (fn. 17).

²⁶ See also Robert D. Lee: *Overcoming Tradition and Modernity. The Search for Islamic Authenticity*, Boulder 1997; Richard K. Khuri: *Freedom, Modernity and Islam*, Syracuse 1998; Erdmute Heller and Hassouna Mosbahi (eds.): *Islam, Demokratie, Moderne. Aktuelle Antworten arabischer Denker*, München 1998.

Buddhist philosophy (or religion) still enjoys considerable popularity in many parts of the world; surprisingly enough, an increasing resonance can be observed in the Western hemisphere: Beyond the West, traditional orientations and the marked adaptability of Buddhism to varying local circumstances have played an important role in its survival over a period of more than 2500 years.

The attraction Buddhism has to some Westerners seemed to be related to the fact that it is seen as a counterpoint to the Western way of thinking and living.¹ Buddhism is understood as a "peaceful" and "green" life-orientation that is not overloaded by metaphysical burdens. Karl Jaspers wrote several decades ago: "A glow of peacefulness lies over Asia in spite of all gruesome and awful things that happened and happen there as everywhere else. Buddhism became the only world religion which does not know violence, persecution of heretics, inquisition, witch trials and crusades."² This latter observation might be exaggerated as the last 15 years in Sri Lanka definitely show another picture, i.e. that of a highly influential variety of the Sinhalese Buddhism under aggressive-militant, even racist premises that are based on a doctrine of superiority.

Buddhism, therefore, is obviously not immune to militancy in itself, however paradox this observation might be. In this it has the same fate as other life philosophies and religions where a certain faction is instrumentalized by, or itself develops into, a militant political movement.³

More interesting than these observations, however, is the question that will be discussed below, that is the question of the Buddhist image of public order. Since Buddhism has manifested itself in many contradictory varieties the question has certainly to be directed to the original interpretation, i.e. to that of Gautama Buddha himself. In spite of all the different accentuations which Buddhism has experienced over the centuries, all these varieties still have a lot in common, a fact that justifies a concentrated look at its original articulation.⁴

The core question that arises could be formulated as follows: Has Buddhism, being emphatically focused on the redemption of the individual, a clear image of a public order that is congenial to its basic orientation? And more over: Is it possible to discern images in Buddhism that form a constructive argumentative bridge between its original orientation and

¹ Johan Galtung: *Buddhism. A Quest for Unity and Peace*, Honolulu 1988.

² Karl Jaspers: *Vernunft und Freiheit. Ausgewählte Schriften*, Stuttgart 1959, p. 469.

³ On (the case of) Sri Lanka see Jakob Rösel: *Die Gestalt und Entstehung des Singhalesischen Nationalismus*, Berlin 1996.

⁴ For more information on the history and variants of Buddhism see Edward Conze: *Der Buddhismus. Wesen und Entwicklung*, Stuttgart 1995¹⁰; id.: *Buddhistisches Denken. Drei Phasen buddhistischer Philosophie in Indien*, Frankfurt a.M. 1988; Hans Küng and Heinz Bechert: *Christentum und Weltreligionen - Buddhismus*, München 1995²; Peter Gäng: *Was ist Buddhismus*, Frankfurt a.M. 1996; Volker Zotz: *Geschichte der buddhistischen Philosophie*, Reinbek b. Hamburg 1996; Ulrich Schneider: *Der Buddhismus*, Darmstadt 1997⁴; Ram Adhar Mall: *Buddhismus. Religion der Postmoderne?*, Hildesheim 1990; as well as Masao Abe: *Der Buddhismus*, in Arvind Sharma (ed.): *Innenansichten der großen Religionen*, Frankfurt a.M. 1997, pp. 11-108. On Buddhism in the context of Indian philosophy see Ram Adhar Mall and Heinz Hülsmann: *Die drei Geburtsorte der Philosophie: China, Indien, Europa*, Bonn 1989, pp. 204-220. For a collection of sources on original Buddhism see Gautama Buddha: *Die vier edlen Wahrheiten*, ed. and translated by Klaus Mylius, München 1994⁵, as well as Edward Conze (ed.): *Im Zeichen Buddhas. Buddhistische Texte*, Frankfurt a.M. 1957.

the demands of the modern world, especially the pluralistic composition of that world. In other words: Does Buddhism contain a political theory and is it open to the challenges of modern political theory which has been struggling for a long time with the imperatives of coexistence in pluralistically fissured societies?

These questions are highly interesting for Buddhist-based societies undergoing the process of modernization, but also for the intercultural dialogue which is focused on finding foundations for peaceful coexistence under the premises of a politicized pluralistic world.

5.1 Homelessness as an Ideal

Buddhism stands for the teachings of redemption (soteriology): The life of the individual-it insinuates-is full of suffering, but there is a way out of the suffering and disaster in life. It can be found by detaching oneself from the world and by overcoming self-centredness. If both are achieved, the endless cycle of suffering and reincarnation can be ended. The individual changes into a Buddha, into an enlightened being. The self-cognition of Buddha, his enlightenment under the fig tree, is generally summarized in four sentences, "The four noble truths":⁵

The *first* truth emphasizes the fact that the human existence in accordance with its nature is full of suffering (*dukkha*). "All events in life are marked by suffering, easily seen even by a superficial observer. Birth, illness, death, again and again the same restless life and death, endless: this is the basic suffering. Life is furthermore full of grief, of disappointments, of hate. Even joy is poisoned as it is connected with worries, or it means suffering for others, or it is based on circumstances that create suffering; this dubious joy cannot cause release or at least satisfy our search for happiness."⁶ Everything, moreover-the world and the life of the individual-is subject to unsteadiness, i.e. change and transitoriness which is the reason for suffering. The human being wants to cling to conditions, things and other people as they are familiar to him and offer security. But this clinging becomes the onset of suffering as the wish to keep a firm hold on everything that is familiar is doomed to failure as all these things are transitory: they are subject to constant change. Change is part of life and, thus, inevitable.

The *second* truth describes the creation of suffering: At its root lies desire ("thirst") and blindness ("ignorance"). "This world seduces the human being to cling to life as soon as it stimulates his senses and with it determines the lines of his consciousness. The more his thirst intensifies and the more tempting his desires become, the more will he identify himself with the world, the more deeply rooted will his ineradicable conviction become that he is a personality and not only the chance sum of automatic events, and that it is his true self that stands behind every empirical occurrence of the world giving it its cohesion. If the human being succumbs to this error he clings all the more to the routine that connects him to all that is in this world and which seems to give his existence consistency and wealth. He assumes to be able to retain and rescue himself by clinging to this very world with the intention of

⁵ The following is based on the compact account by A. Theodor Khoury: *Buddhismus*, in Emma Brunner-Traut (ed.): *Die fünf großen Weltreligionen*, Freiburg 1991, pp. 40-61.

⁶ Id. p. 42.

obtaining joy and happiness and, if possible, even to escape death somehow. But this only leads to more bonds and an inevitable repetition of reincarnations."⁷

In spite of stating ever-present suffering and in spite of the knowledge of its origin the *third* noble truth says the following: It is possible to be released from this suffering. "The elimination of suffering signifies the achievement of a condition which no longer shows any characteristics of our empirical thinking. It is a condition in which blindness is eliminated, in which desire is silenced; there is no reincarnation and no creation, no inconstancy, no transience, no death. What remains is a condition of complete strength, pureness, peace, immortality, bliss. It is the seclusion from the world, the far island, the place that offers refuge and shelter. In Buddhism this condition is called *nirvana*. Nirvana is the opposite of the world, and therefore it cannot be positively and definitely described. It is the absolute in contrast to our composed world; it is the transcendence, the completely different, that cannot be comprehended and explained in terms and expressions of this world. Nirvana is the condition of total liberation from defilement and every link to the world, liberation from ignorance and from desire, removal from the world and dissolving of the empirical person emptied of its own self."⁸

In the *fourth* noble truth the road is shown which leads to nirvana. It is the path subdivided into eight steps that leads to the elimination of suffering. It demands: right opinion (right insight), right motive (right way of thinking), right speech, right behavior, right way of living, right effort, right attention and right immersion (right meditation). The important issue is to see things as they are, as true as possible. Furthermore it is necessary to become conscious of one's own motives that determine the individual behavior. Right behavior means never to act if another being is harmed. The means for living should be gained without damage to others. Right effort can be seen as intellectual endeavor, as the cultivation of thought and sentiments. Right attention and right immersion are interpreted with the consciousness of emotional and mental processes, with self-knowledge, self-realization and spirituality, with training of consciousness, i.e. with meditation as a means for liberation. "Meditation and immersion lead the human being to enlightenment after having passed its most important stages. The first stage of immersion liberates him from desire; the second focuses on the concentration of the mind which gains an interior unity by the elimination of thought and consideration; the third stage of immersion concentrates on the overcoming of any joy and any concrete feeling; the fourth stage finally leads to the disappearance of well-being that is due to the consciousness of the body and the inner sense organ. At the end there remain only the pure enlightenment, the pure and empty consciousness and the undisturbed equanimity. In this condition the Buddhist reaches the highest enlightenment in a mystic intuition and acquires absolute wisdom."⁹

With the eightfold path to the right life, especially with its seventh and eighth component regarding the training of the consciousness, an arduous way to redemption is predestined. As already shown by this short outline it is a path full of requirements. It does not surprise, therefore, that in Buddhism this path was originally left only to monks. It is, therefore, also correct to state: The real Buddhist is the mendicant monk (*bhikṣu*) who dedicates most of his

⁷ Id. p. 44.

⁸ Id. p. 46.

⁹ Id. p. 47.

time to meditation and immersion and purifies his mind from any kind of defilement, blindness and desire. Poverty, celibacy and limitless peaceableness are the basic principles of his life. It was also the task of monks to preach the Buddhist doctrine, to explain it and to introduce the novices to the methods of meditation.¹⁰

The path of redemption requires, therefore, idealiter, *homelessness*, which meant future monks had to leave house and home, wife and children, also the extended family common in those times and, by joining the community of monks, to abandon the world completely in order to find in this homelessness a way out of all suffering and disaster in life. However: "The human being enters this state of homelessness in order to detach himself from the world, not to remodel it."¹¹

In the original Buddhism remarkable accentuations can be found: The extensive suffering in life, in which the entire world including the human being is involved, is not hermetically sealed. There is a tiny opening—a break that opens a highly arduous path of redemption which liberates from greed, hate and blindness. Furthermore: In spite of denying the I and the self, as they are without substance and therefore remain a fiction, the human being is on his own with regard to the path of redemption. Meditation and immersion are highly individual efforts. The escape from the circle of suffering reincarnations, i.e. the enlightenment and redemption can only be achieved on account of these individual efforts. Thus, the individual effort is demanded in order to finally overcome the self and its egocentrism. Even if everything is overshadowed by the premises of transitoriness, of frailty, of non-permanence, of futility, at the end of the path of redemption there is the chance of permanence and peace: *nirvana*. Against the danger of being overwhelmed by the world and its chronic entanglements stands the possibility of withdrawing the self from this very world.¹²

So far, so good! But is the world now left to itself?

5.2 Society and World—Simply Residual Categories?

First of all it has to be stated that the monks do not lead a life of complete isolation as they live within a spiritual community: the *sangha*, the community of the cloister. With regard to sociality this is of paradigmatic significance in Buddhism.¹³ The community is open to everybody, a fact that has a fundamental, even revolutionary importance in societies based on castes. Equality, therefore, is one of its basic principles. The inner organization is not built on authoritarian power structures, but on deliberation and consensual decisions. The *sangha* is, therefore, a self-administrative community of equivalent human beings which signals the potential equality of all people. However, it cannot be overseen that the *sangha*-community is not self-reliant but a mendicant order. The monks depend in their subsistence on the alms of other people that do not have the privilege of concentrating on the individual path of redemption in their present existence. Intended or not by Gautama Buddha himself, a spiritual aristocracy characteristic in original Buddhism was therefore established.

¹⁰ Id. p. 48.

¹¹ According to Klaus Mylius in his introduction to the original Buddhist texts quoted in fn. 4; here p. 37.

¹² See also Michael Carrithers: *Der Buddha. Eine Einführung*, Stuttgart 1996.

¹³ See also Volker Zotz: *Buddha*, Reinbek b. Hamburg 1991, esp. pp. 92ff.

If the *sangha*-concept can consequently be derived from the philosophical assumptions of Buddhism, the question remains how the rest of the society should be constructed, and especially by what public order it should be defined?

The first thought that comes to mind is that the *sangha*, even if it is withdrawn from the world and focuses on the individual redemption of its members, is still a model for the remaining society, i.e. for most of the people. A positive influence should radiate from the *sangha*, thus transmitting its own life principles on the non-*sangha* society. It can furthermore be assumed that the *sangha* acts in an advisory capacity. On its path to enlightenment it can more simply and effectively than the other members of society transmit congenial orientations of co-existence, even if its realization beyond the *sangha*-community remains imperfect.

Following on from this, the thought is not unrealistic that this society should, even if only in tendency, be organized like the *sangha*-community itself: harmonious, consensual, consulting. And the consideration that in spite of the principal equality of mankind such a society could be lead by a-decidedly-wise and kind ruler is a natural conclusion. This ruler should be inspired by the Buddhist doctrine and act in accordance with it. He, too, will have to acknowledge that the cosmos has its own order, its own law to which he, as everything else, is subject. His tasks will include modern measures for the security of public order, which are to be executed in the "right way of thinking". The "law of determined formation" already teaches that violence and criminality can only be stemmed if the ruler succeeds in counteracting or eliminating poverty as, according to the mentioned law, poverty produces theft, theft leads to counteraction by arms, use of arms leads to killing, and killing produces lies. If therefore poverty can be eliminated this vicious circle can be thwarted. The main issue is to supply the required material necessities that enable people to lead a Buddhist life. The endeavors of the ruler, therefore, have to concentrate on an enlightened welfare policy. If he fails in that endeavor, he will have to be replaced in order to maintain a well-organized community.

The chances of ruling such a community successfully can be increased by taking specific precautions. They include, first of all, regular and well-attended council meetings: Autocratic rule would correspond to egocentrism; deliberation, however, would reflect the complex character of reality. Secondly, as in the *sangha* so in a larger community: peaceable consent as the desirable orientation of action is emphasized. A third point would be to stick to dependable laws: Everything which has been proven, should not be altered. Respect for old people, aversion to violence against women, maintenance of monuments and fostering of traditions as well as protection and provision of strangers in the country are further points of orientation in successful ruling.¹⁴

In this way a symbiotic arrangement of successful ruling is, *idealiter*, created: The ruler distinguishes himself by excellent personal qualities, especially on account of his selflessness, his uprightness and his inclination and engagement for justice, equity and fairness. He protects the community of monks (*sangha*) and seeks their advice. The shining example of the ruler and the *sangha* is conveyed to the people. This good-behavior can be

¹⁴ Id. p. 97.

expected especially if the ruler takes care of the well-being of broad masses: He helps the people and the people offer him their respect-as long as their well-being is guaranteed. If the ruler becomes egoistic, and if the people fall back into poverty the well-balanced arrangement between ruler, *sangha*, and people collapses.

In an ideal case this could be thought of as the foundation of a *dhamma*-oriented society. *In nuce* it would mean a moral community, the inner spirituality of which could be assumed to run along the same lines; at the same time congenial behavior in the individual as well as in the collective would be observed. To put it differently: "the interests of the individual and the interests of a group do not necessarily have to be contradictory for a Buddhist, it must not be a situation of 'either, or'. The latter is only the case in a society where the people have not yet found their way out of ignorance and therefore still feel cut off from the whole."¹⁵

However, the social and political reality did not as a rule demonstrate this ideal situation. The outlined relation between ruler, *sangha* and people is based on idealistic assumptions. It is more realistic to suppose that both ruler and ruling class are egotistic and do not deserve respect; that the people are exploited and do not benefit from the paternalistic welfare-policy with the result that they withdraw legitimacy from the ruler; that the *sangha* tends to follow the more powerful, thus replacing enlightened deliberation by the production of power ideology.¹⁶

It seems obvious that, historically seen, the relations between the ruler (state) and the *sangha* have been extremely varied. A conformity of both can be observed in Lamaism in Tibet, in the fusion of state and *sangha* in the northern Wei-dynasty of China especially between 460 and 464 as well as in Korea between 550 and 664. In another case a legal authority over the *sangha* can be determined during the Chinese Tang-dynasty with demonstrations of support, regulation, but also of persecution. There were times where the *sangha* was successful in warding off the demands of the Chinese emperor, thus maintaining its own autonomy. A mutual abandonment of interference between state and *sangha* can be observed in India prior to the time when Ashoka declared Buddhism as the (in this case most tolerant) state religion.¹⁷ Critical Buddhists claim that well-meaning kings have been a rarity in history and that the *sangha* more often than not lost its significance as the moral figurehead of society. The result was then a profitable collaboration with the powerful, a development that obviously mostly took place when the beggar monks started to lead a settled form of existence.

5.3 How Should Buddhism React to Modernity?

The message of Buddha to mankind consists of a practical doctrine of redemption. Its main theme is the redemption from aspects of being which cause suffering; the release from desire, hate, blindness, stubbornness, stupidity and complacency. Buddha wanted to lecture

¹⁵ Verena Reichle: *Die Grundgedanken des Buddhismus*, Frankfurt a.M. 1994, p. 61.

¹⁶ See Heinz Bechert: *Buddhismus, Staat und Gesellschaft in den Ländern des Theravada-Buddhismus*, Frankfurt a.M. 1966, esp. vol. 1, as well as exemplary out of a huge literature Somboon Suksamran: *Political Buddhism in Southeast Asia*, London 1977.

¹⁷ See Masao Abe, op. cit. (fn. 4), p. 73.

on the withdrawal from worldliness that leads to enlightenment and redemption. "It was no way the intention of Buddha to develop a philosophy for the study of worldly interrelations that once again would only enchain the mind with new bonds."¹⁸

It is, therefore, only logical and comprehensible, in the light of the doctrine of redemption, that especially in its original interpretation Buddhism did not have any feeling for policy-theoretical or state-philosophical questions. This fact is also documented in other interpretations and analyses of Buddhism, i.e. in secondary literature, in which no discussions can be found on a public order congenial to Buddhism.¹⁹ If they exist at all they are mainly focused on new political conditions of a traditional society and not on a modernizing environment in Buddhist communities.

It is now possible to forge an argumentative link between Buddhism and public order in the context of traditional society. This is possible, as in other high mythologies and religions, through the idealistic construction of a good and benevolent ruler who walks the path to enlightenment; a ruler who deserves legitimacy as long as he is able to guarantee the welfare of his people. In addition, the community of monks, the *sangha*, can offer informative orientation to the ruler as well as to the people, orientation which the people, busy on the treadmill of everyday life, cannot find by themselves.

Even if this construct is freed from idealism it cannot be applied to modern aspects of life. These are determined by socially mobile, pluralistically organized, politicizable and politicized societies. All those drives the Buddhist doctrine recognizes in an individual, i.e. its being driven by a variety of aspirations (*samskaras*) like desires, inclinations, interests, intentions and personal wishes can also and all the more so be found in interest groups of modern societies, which organize themselves in parties and lobbyist units. The modern political background is defined by exactly this variety of wants. Walking the "eightfold path to the right life" at an individual level will hardly allow the overcoming of this variety of endeavors at the collective level in the political sphere, even if the purification of the people from compulsive instincts might be desirable.

All that the community of monks can achieve within a lifetime or, most likely, within several existences after reincarnations, i.e. enlightenment and redemption, remains somewhat unlikely and unreflected with regard to the "samskaras" within the public sphere.

The original Buddhism cannot be made responsible for this argumentative gap. It assumes a traditional environment and takes its relatively static general outlines as more or less given, despite the facts of continuous reproduction and death. This enables Buddhism to concentrate its reflections on the individual path of enlightenment—a fact that was overcome in later varieties of Buddhism, especially in the Mahayana-Buddhism without, however, turning the construction of public order into a topic of thorough discussion.

¹⁸ Klaus Mylius, op. cit. (fn. 4), p. 35.

¹⁹ The fact can be found even there where one, at least following the book titles, could expect the opposite. See, for example, Charles Wei-hsun Fu and Sandra A. Wawrytko (ed.): *Buddhist Ethics and Modern Society. An International Symposium*, New York 1991.

The mentioned argumentative gap remains symptomatic for contemporary Buddhism. Even if it is problematic this fact is perfectly understandable: A doctrine that concentrates so intensely on the enlightenment of the individual and his liberation from entanglements and wants can hardly get involved into constitutional discussions into institutional limitations or into the organizational management of collective endeavors via parties and lobbyist groups. The original programme, the redemption of the individual from the forced cycle of reincarnation, and the examination of the construction of the public order which is determined by a proliferating variety of wants that have to be channelled, are completely contradictory points of view. The first requires the renunciation of the world that creates the variety of wants—a renunciation that is conceivable and also practically possible, at least for a limited number of human beings. The second, the world of endeavors that manifests itself in collective interest groups, is an inevitable reality that cannot be eliminated. If this reality is not accepted and coped with, the Buddhist doctrine only serves as a means to satisfy purely private wishes.

The above mentioned problem has at least been recognized in contemporary Buddhist literature. Sulak Sivaraksa writes in his ground-breaking book on a Buddhist version for the renewal of today's society: "In making Buddhism more relevant for the contemporary world, it is important not to compromise on the essentials, such as the ethical precepts (sila). However, these ethical precepts need to be rethought in order to make sense of life in contemporary societies. Buddhists traditionally have lived in rather simple societies, largely agrarian, as is still often the case in Southeast and South Asia. In such societies, ethical issues may also be simple. One can say, 'I am a good person. I don't kill. I don't steal. I don't commit adultery. I don't lie.' But, when the society becomes much more complex, these simple interpretations of ethical norms don't work so well."²⁰

Sivaraksa's discourse communicates in a most sympathetic manner a philanthropic socio-political engagement: In the political sphere he pleads against dogmatism in the self-manifestations of Buddhists. In accordance with Buddhist tradition he rejects any form of violence. He declares himself against the accumulation of worldly goods as long as millions of people are hungry. One of his central issues is sympathy as well as true speech and right behavior. The environment has to be treated with care. As can be expected, Sivaraksa's orientations are gentle and green, but in his examination of the modern environment and in his endeavors to create a modern and humane society, he does not present any specific ideas with respect to the construction of a public order congenial to Buddhist thinking.

This difficulty might be due to the fact that such ideas cannot be elaborated without considering an institutional arrangement. Institutions, however, are bound to be durable, fixed and mostly oligarchic structures. This fact is seen worldwide. Buddhist thinking, however, considers the world as an open process. It does not know a durable substance, no entities, only the momentary existence. Institutions, however, especially if they are stable and durable, stand for "substantiality". This is especially valid for constitutions that are able to offer a long-lasting management of conflicts by channelling and cushioning the "samskaras" in the public space.

²⁰ Sulak Sivaraksa: *A Buddhist Vision for Renewing Society*, Bangkok 1994³, p. 357.

Thus, it must be assumed, that for socio-politically engaged modern Buddhist authors one or the other variant of a democratic constitutional state of Western design is taken as a desirable political frame for their own societies, even if this is not explicitly articulated. Where this attitude towards the structuring of public order is registered, and with it a bridge between Buddhism and modernity, this correlation can from a pragmatic point of view be seen as an acceptable solution. The outlined gap in the argument remains, however, due to the initial self-articulation of the Buddhist dogma of redemption.

Therefore, it can be stated: Buddhism does not have a congenial political theory. This causes its weakness, and it reinforces its tendency to follow the powers that be, a fact that was often observed in the history of Buddhist societies.²¹ This position, however, favors one of the strong points in Buddhism: a high socio-political engagement of the individual or of Buddhist dissidents, who stand for the core values of Buddhist life philosophy, but also for the values of modernity: for equality and solidarity as well as for compassion and freedom.²²

5.4 Final Remark

The problem described is not only one of Buddhism in societies that are recognized as Buddhist. It is of general significance for all Buddhist people, even if they live in the Western hemisphere. Just as in countries with a Buddhist origin, questions arise as to whether the path of redemption and the existence as a citizen, or better as state citizen, are compatible. The difference between Western countries and those in which Buddhism is of quantitative significance can be seen in the fact that Western societies are as a rule based on fixed political and legal premises: Buddhist people are regarded as normal citizens in a democratic constitutional state, where it is obviously not possible not to be a citizen. But they evaluate governmental activities according to their own lines of reasoning, i.e. that of the original Buddhist thinking. They know the difference between the "wheel of power" and the "wheel of love", and they know that the latter can thoroughly determine only the world of spiritual communities. They see, therefore, no alternative than to get involved in power. The activities of the state are accepted or criticized according to the degree they correspond to individual moral ideas of Buddhists: Does the state promote moral order? Does the state consider the wants and the wishes of all the people? Does the state promote their welfare?

Answers to these questions determine the behavior of Buddhist people in Western societies. But they are raised within a predetermined political framework in which the plurality of endeavors, the public relevant *samskaras*, are not doubted but rather are widely accepted.²³ Will the development in the core Buddhist countries also be determined by this conceptually not justified, but in practice already realized compromise between "homelessness" and public order? With regard to Buddhism this question will remain an open one.

²¹ On this fact special emphasis is put by Sulak Sivaraksa in the book quoted in fn. 20.

²² Representative of this orientation is the broad literature published by the Dalai Lama. See e.g. *Einführung in den Buddhismus*, Freiburg 1993; *Der Weg zur Freiheit*, München 1996.

²³ A discussion illustrating the problems of Buddhist orientation in Western societies, which are described here, can be found in Subhuti: *Going Forth and Citizenship*, in: *Western Buddhist Review*, vol. 1, 1994 (without page, taken from Internet: <http://www.fwbo.org/wbr/citizenship.html>).

A specialist on Asian philosophy and especially on Buddhism, Thomas Cleary, has formulated this remaining, probably insoluble problem as follows: "If the idea of competition finds fertile ground within institutional structures this, in the end, will always lead to a failure of realizing a lively Buddhism, no matter what impression reaches the outside world. There exists in a way a leak, a breaking point which does not allow a concentration on the truth."²⁴ A socially mobile, politicized world, however, cannot be conceived without competitive ideas or without managing conflicts within constitutionally accepted institutional structures. Therefore, a problem will remain for Buddhism which is far from being merely marginal.

²⁴ Thomas Cleary (ed.): *Dhammapada. Die Quintessenz der Buddha-Lehre*, Frankfurt a.M. 1997, p. 83. Therefore it is not surprising that early Buddhist philosophical assumptions again and again had been met with doubts, scepticism and even rejection for philosophical and practical reasons, which brought about the development of diverse schools in Buddhism. See Gregor Paul: *Buddhistische Glücksvorstellungen. Eine historisch-systematische Skizze*, in Joachim Schummer (ed.): *Glück und Ethik*, Würzburg 1998, pp. 47-68.

6. From Spiritual to Modern Plurality? Hinduism at the Crossroads

6.1 Spiritual Plurality

Experts widely agree in the characterization of Hinduism as "the most multifaceted religious entity currently known".¹ This spiritual "broad-mindedness" even induced one observer to call the term 'Hinduism' a misunderstanding: "The word Hinduism is *not a self-description* of an Indian religion but rather an invention of Europeans. It was supposed to label the religion of the Hindus, but unfortunately those who coined the term had insufficient knowledge about the religion. It was not realized rapidly enough that they had several religions. As a result Hinduism has subsequently been written and talked about as one of the major world religions. For some time it was thought that Hinduism did really exist. Today it is clear, though there is an unwillingness to admit it, that Hinduism is nothing more than an orchid cultivated by European scholarship. It is much too beautiful to be weeded, but it nevertheless remains a synthetic plant: It does not exist in nature."²

A point in favor of this "shocking claim" is that there is neither dogma, or belief nor ritual which all Hindus share: "In India religious beliefs and rituals can differ from one village to the next", another observer states. He underlines that it is impossible to identify a particular historic figure as the founder of Hinduism. As a result it is impossible to draw parallels to Jesus in Christianity, Mohammed in Islam or Buddha in Buddhism. In contrast to Christianity and Islam where the Bible and the Koran constitute fixed points of reference, Hinduism is not based on a single script but on many which convey no uniform doctrine.³

Since Hinduism presents itself as the sum of a number of religions "it is up to the individuals whether they are atheists, pan-en-theists or theists, whether they regard Vishnu or Shiva the ruler of the universe etc. Correspondingly, there is not any generally binding theory about the genesis of the world or its material or immaterial components, about the nature of the soul or about its relation to the body etc. Additionally, behavior is not subject to fixed rules that are equally compelling for all. For this reason there is immense diversity in religious practice, just to mention some of many variations which could be used as examples: there are Hindus who eat meat and others who are vegetarians; there are some who have ecstatic orgies and others who abandon themselves to the highest asceticism."⁴ And this spiritual plurality is not only visible from the outside. "Hindus put emphasis on this characteristic of their religion and

¹ Helmut von Glasenapp: *Die fünf Weltreligionen*, München 1993², p. 15. See also Heinrich von Stietencron: *Die Erscheinungsformen des Hinduismus*, in Dietmar Rothermund (ed.): *Indien. Kultur, Geschichte, Politik Wirtschaft, Umwelt. Ein Handbuch*, München 1995, ch. IX; Arvind Sharma: *Der Hinduismus*, in Arvind Sharma (ed.): *Innenansichten der großen Religionen*, Frankfurt a.M. 1997, pp. 291-386; Peter Schreiner: *Hinduismus*, in Emma Brunner-Traut (ed.): *Die fünf großen Weltreligionen*, Freiburg 1991⁴, pp. 19-38. For a general survey also Ram Adhar Mall: *Philosophie im Vergleich der Kulturen*, Darmstadt 1995, p. 108ff.

² Heinrich von Stietencron in Hans Küng and Heinrich von Stietencron: *Christentum und Weltreligionen: Hinduismus*, München 1995, pp. 25/26.

³ Andreas Becke: *Hinduismus zur Einführung*, Hamburg 1996, p. 10.

⁴ Von Glasenapp, op. cit. (fn. 1), p. 17.

cite the unlimited diversity of objects of worship and the multitude of means permitted to gain salvation."⁵

The observation of this polymorphism within Hinduism was recently highlighted in the reform-oriented interpretation of Hinduism by Ram Adhar Mall. For his interpretation he chose a theme from one of the oldest scripts of Hinduism, the *Rigveda*: "The True is the One. Wise men put it differently."⁶ This means that within Hinduism, as Mahatma Ghandi once said, in principle there are different ways to attain truth and realize God.

Besides this Hindus do not only apply this broad-minded view to their own religion, which incidentally had the effect of preventing any large-scale intra-Hindu religious wars, they also relate to other religions on the basis of the same perspective. In this spirit Mall says: "Every believer is allowed to believe in being on the right path. It is, however, presumptuous, arrogant and blasphemous to believe that another is on the wrong one. Believe and let believe, pray and let pray are fundamental attitudes which animate the ecumenical spirit among the world religions. This attitude itself is, however, not a religion; it conveys to the mind a spirit of tolerance which ought to motivate, lead and guide all religions."⁷ Thus, equality of religions and regarding each as being of the same value must be distinguished. From the Hindu perspective this means: Spiritual plurality and tolerance become synonyms.

There is therefore a clear distinction between Hindu religiousness and those religions such as Judaism, Christianity and Islam which have an inherent exclusionary claim to truth.⁸ Taking such a premise as the basis, the question has to be asked whether a bridge exists between this remarkably pluralist orientation of Hinduism and *modern* plurality.

6.2 Modern Plurality?

At first glance, such bridging seems simple because modern plurality is founded on a multitude of interpretations of "truth". This multitude, however, is not only understood as an inevitable spiritual fact but also as a *social* fact. Creating public order which guarantees peaceful coexistence despite a plurality of ideas, truths, beliefs, ideologies and projects which result from a social situation of modernity, becomes the decisive problem.

As a result it must be noted that *conventional* Hinduism is, unsurprisingly and without reproach, deficient; a characteristic which it has in common with all traditional cultures.⁹ However, even for modern Hinduism, particularly in an environment of modernization, it is still true what was said about historic Hinduism: "Differences are tolerated but also hierarchical. (Hindu, D.S.) Tolerance takes for granted that the dominant hierarchical order is accepted."¹⁰ Hierarchical order signifies the caste system that is still a striking characteristic

⁵ See id.

⁶ Ram Adhar Mall: *Der Hinduismus. Seine Stellung in der Vielfalt der Religionen*, Darmstadt 1997.

⁷ See id., p. 5.

⁸ See the book by Küng and Stietencron cited in fn. 2.

⁹ See the argument in ch. 1 of this publication.

¹⁰ Monika Böck and Aparna Rao: *Aspekte der Gesellschaftsstruktur Indiens: Kasten und Stämme*, in Rothermund (ed.), op. cit. (fn. 1), pp. 111-131, esp. p. 126.

of the Hindu cultural area.¹¹ A caste system in which the idea of social inequality of human beings crystallizes and is reinforced institutionally is, however, the opposite of an open society based on social mobility that is representative of modern plurality.

It is therefore possible to go along with the formulation of Mall: "It has often been claimed that one has to belong to a caste to be a Hindu. This interpretation of Hinduism is incorrect because originally castes simply constituted different labels with respect to professions. Many neo-Hindu doctrines explicitly deny the membership of a caste as essential to Hinduism. One can be a Hindu without caste system. Besides the Vedic beliefs, there are other convictions binding those who profess Hinduism: the belief in the immortality of soul, the karmic law, and the possibility of some form of redemption."¹² Nevertheless the historic and actual situation is obvious: For Hindus cosmos is a systematic whole in which, as von Glasenapp emphasizes, "the living beings which fill the universe are, from birth on, strictly divided according to their capabilities and functions: a lion is assigned different duties and rights from a cow, a god different ones from a human, a spirit different ones from those living in hell, etc."¹³ Furthermore humans are divided from each other: At the head of the human race there are their highest representatives, Brahmans, followed by less important "warriors" (*kshatriyas*), who are then followed by farmers (*vaishyas*). These three groups are supported by a fourth caste, the "*shudras*", who include the casteless as well as persons called pariahs or "untouchables" carrying on a trade thought of as dishonest or impure. Experts of the caste structure emphasize that the mentioned four main castes subdivide into more than 3000 sub-castes.¹⁴

While, as Mall states, the caste system is not *idealiter* constitutive for Hinduism or at least for being a Hindu, Hinduism is in reality inconceivable without the social order of castes, its inherent notion of hierarchy and ascription of worth, its attribution of purity and impurity, and the corresponding division of labor. Obviously in reality there is a major discrepancy between *spiritual tolerance*-a characteristic of the Hindu faith which has allowed it to easily absorb new spiritual ideas-and *social intolerance* whose basis is the strict classification of people according to ascriptive values; rigid social stratification directed against open plurality.

The facts therefore seem to be paradox: In Hinduism, as stated by von Glasenapp, believers are allowed greater freedom of belief than in any other metaphysical system. The only demand of its adherents is the belief in an ethical world-order which is continuously self-regulated through the consequential power of guilt and merit, the karmic law. Whether a Hindu imagines this ethical world-order as an automatically acting eternal law, or whether he simply assumes that god manifests itself as either a meta-physical being, as some type of physical being, or as a mixture of these conceptions, is left to his discretion. The same is true for the decision as to whether one of the numerous deities of the pantheons of Vishnu or Shiva or indeed one of the other gods is superior to all the others. Furthermore no institution dictates that Hindus should believe that there are eternal spiritual monads with particular qualities, that the material world developed out of a primary spirit, primary matter, or from

¹¹ Ernst Pulsfort: Was ist los in der indischen Welt? Das Drama auf dem indischen Subkontinent, Freiburg 1993, ch. 3.

¹² Mall, op. cit. (fn. 6), p. 4. On the caste system see the early analysis by Ram Adhar Mall: *Studie zur indischen Philosophie und Soziologie*, Meisenheim am Glan 1974, pp. 151-181.

¹³ Von Glasenapp, op. cit. (fn. 1), p. 19.

¹⁴ See Böck/Rao, op. cit. (fn. 10), as well as Pulsfort, op. cit. (fn. 11).

atoms. There is no dictate that good works or knowledge or the love of god will lead to salvation, or that the state of the redeemed is characterized by transfigured sublimation or by the complete sacrifice of individual identity. This broad-minded point of view concerning metaphysical issues, however, is opposed by rigid caste rules that mould every detail of every person and deeply affect all aspects of their personal lives.¹⁵

But is this really a paradox? Or does a symbiotic relation between spiritual tolerance and social intolerance exist which is based on the *power structure of the Hindu society*? Social reality in past and present India suggests such a thesis. It is also underlined by the early rise of anti-Brahman reformatory movements such as Jainism and Buddhism: Both of them neither acknowledged the spiritual superiority of the Brahmans, the highest Aryan class, nor the caste system, although this attitude did not undermine the astonishing survival and persistence of this system.¹⁶

6.3 The Challenge

In his above cited interpretation, Mall illustrated how it is possible to imagine Hinduism without the burden of the caste system. What he wishes to elaborate are the ideas from Hinduism which could ideally be included in "world ethics". These include particularly the "idea of the One having many names", that is the sense of spiritual plurality within which there is distinction without discrimination.¹⁷

So far, so good. But is it possible to simply abstract from the "plague of castes" (Mall)?

It is impossible to conceive of modern plurality without the premise of the equality of man. However, the reality of Hindu society is that such equality is unknown; each caste has a superiority complex in relation to their caste inferiors. Society is dominated by inclusion and exclusion and is defined by a code of conduct and corresponding ritual order specific to each caste. One is a Hindu not through choice, but rather by birth; each person is born within a specific, exclusively defined caste and grows up observing its social conventions.¹⁸

Phenomena which can currently be observed in India, such as the increasingly radical social plurality resulting from mobilization and politicization, and the other far-reaching challenges of modernization, have yet to be dealt with by Hinduism. However, the Hindu world will not be able to escape from the pressure resulting from the social and political problems caused by these processes. The tactic of avoidance has been successful up to now for various reasons: 75% of the Indian population live in the countryside where the caste system still functions; the caste system has only become leaky in the cities. The secular state, part of the colonial heritage adopted by the first generation of leaders of independent India, constitutionally grants the equality of both caste- and casteless-Hindus. Within this

¹⁵ Von Glasenapp, op. cit. (fn. 1). pp. 26/27.

¹⁶ Since the middle of the last century the attempts of so-called neo-Hinduism to conceptually mediate between Hinduism and modernity point in the same direction. For a survey see Becke, op. cit. (fn. 3), ch. 3. On Jainism see von Stietencron, op. cit. (fn. 1), p. 152ff., on Buddhism id., p. 154ff.

¹⁷ Mall, op. cit. (fn. 6), p. 126.

¹⁸ This perspective is fairly clearly descendent from the political thinking in ancient India. For some information see Hans-Joachim Klimkeit: *Der politische Hinduismus*, Wiesbaden 1981, ch. 1.

framework, the social conflict inherent in the distinction of caste- and casteless-Hindus was politically cushioned by, for example, the still hotly debated quota system, which works in favor of the latter ("positive discrimination"). The effect of such regulations, however, remained limited. Furthermore this secular state is currently under attack from Hindu fundamentalism whose spokesmen comprehend the constitutional and political concessions to the non-Hindu community as a danger to *hindutva*, a politicized Hindu identity which aggressively insists on the moral superiority of Hindus as against all other groups.¹⁹

It is doubtful in the long term whether Hinduism will be able to get rid of the structures, mechanisms and above all the solid interests of social exclusivism. (This being the main aim of Hindu reformists.) The idea of Hinduism without castes, however, is up-to-date in every respect. Whether spiritual plurality can aid the attempt to achieve a break-through either of the idea, or of the reality of *modern* plurality is, in view of internal cultural conflict created by changes in social reality, one of the most interesting and urgent questions for Hinduism. The current political climate in India gives more cause for concern than hope. Radicalization is to be observed within the conflicting parties: that is the consolidation of fundamentalist Hindu positions and a weakening of secularist and modernist ones.²⁰ This process is also evident in non-Hindu groups: particularly in Muslim groups who are less familiar with the secular state for dogmatic reasons; in Sikh groups whose fundamentalist representatives intend to found an independent "Khalistan"; and finally in Christian groups in the north-east of India who also insist on their own identity ("Christistan").²¹ Where the mentality and political power of the conflicting parties moves toward fundamentalist positions, escalation is liable to occur rapidly.²² Today conflict is particularly marked in the militant confrontations between Hindu and Muslim fundamentalists.²³

The process which is long overdue may appear to be a contradiction in terms; that is the detachment of Hinduism from the caste system. This would be tantamount to destroying the

¹⁹ See Hugh van Skyhawk: *Hinduismus und hindutva*, in: *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, vol. 146, no. 1, 1996, pp. 113-127; Jürgen Lütt: *Der Hinduismus auf der Suche nach einem Fundament*, in Hermann Kodranek (ed.): *Die verdrängte Freiheit. Fundamentalismus in den Kirchen*, Freiburg 1991, pp. 218-239. For an actual assessment of the situation see also Amartya Sen: *The Threats to Secular India*, in: *New York Review of Books*, 8 April 1993, pp. 26-32. On the pre-history of the hindutva-movement see the work by Klimkeit cited in fn. 18, chs. II-VI.

²⁰ See Shalini Randeria: *Hindu-Fundamentalismus: Zum Verhältnis von Religion, Geschichte und Identität im modernen Indien*, in Georg Elwert et al. (eds.): *Kulturen und Innovationen*, Berlin 1996, pp. 333-362; Christophe Jaffrelot: *Le syncrétisme stratégique et la construction de l'identité nationaliste hindoue*, in: *Revue française de Science Politique*, vol. 42, no. 4, 1992, pp. 594-617.

²¹ See Pulsfort, op. cit. (fn. 11), chs. 5, 6 and 7.

²² Throwing light on this see Sudhir Kakar: *Die Gewalt der Frommen. Zur Psychologie religiöser und ethnischer Konflikte*, München 1997.

²³ Christian Weiß et al. (eds.): *Religion - Macht - Gewalt. Religiöser Fundamentalismus und Hindu-Moslem-Konflikte in Südasien*, Frankfurt a.M. 1996.

It is remarkable that reports on the changes in the system of political institutions in India, resulting from social awakening of the lower classes of the population, have accumulated recently. Erhard Haubold, in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* of 5th Dec. 1997, writes: "What has been beyond any doubt for centuries, i.e. the domination of Brahmins, today is questioned by sub-castes, untouchables, Muslims and other minorities whose political emancipation has been aided by universal suffrage. Such 'empowerment' of the 'unwashed classes' gives the high establishment the creeps and explains the increasing fragmentation of political parties which are often only of regional importance and attack the federal parliamentary system... And the new rulers of the 'unwashed classes' make no secret of their having little time for democratic polite phrases because they had to wait for power for such a long time."

traditional power system. This would be a process undertaken by Hinduism *against its own tradition*, which is marked by a symbiosis between Hinduism and the caste system. The spiritual plurality conception would have to undergo modernization which would lead to conflict with the position of fundamentalists who claim the superiority of Hindus.

There is, moreover, a dangerous threat: the marginalization of a quarter of the population through the rigid social order (the caste system), which up until now may have cushioned the effects of modernization, may in the future contribute directly to the escalation of social conflict. After all, the mass of the casteless (200 million people), will not accept tradition and caste-bound conditions.²⁴

A sober analysis demands the following statement: Increasing modernization, social mobilization and politicization have led to conditions of structural and cultural violence which, as they currently exist in India, cannot be stabilized in the long run. Due to cumulative conflicts this structural and cultural violence will, sooner or later, probably become physical violence. When this happens, the paragon of spiritual plurality-tolerance-may be destroyed along with the widely spread Hindu ideal of non-violence (*ahimsa*). This dialectic inherent in Hindu society draws attention to the fact that Hinduism is at a crossroads because it represents a more and more outdated social structure. Therefore, attempts to reform Hinduism are overdue for spiritual *and* political reasons.

6.4 "Casteless" Hinduism

How could such an attempt be constituted, which was guided by the basic principles of Hinduism, but which avoided the trap of a socially intolerant caste system? Recently Arvind Sharma has made a relevant suggestion:²⁵ His considerations start from the explicit premise that the modern world consists of societies of people who are literate, geographically and socially mobile, and who have a life expectancy of about three times that of people in traditional societies. For Sharma these characteristics are important because they enable him to reinterpret the original idea of karma and rebirth and, thus, to detach the Hindu lifestyle from the conventional caste system. The central aspect of caste membership is that it is *determined by birth* and remains the same until death. The karma of the previous life determines the caste of the present one; although it is possible to change castes during the course of several lives, it is by and large unchangeable during a single lifetime. In accordance with this conception, the transition to another caste happens at birth and is thus the determining factor for the new life.

In his reinterpretation Sharma starts from the assumption that life was short in pre-modern societies, and possibilities to influence its form and thus to accumulate good karma were limited. So a fatalistic interpretation of the idea of karma was more likely; the classification of man by (re)birth and the resulting confrontation with lifelong (though lasting only a few years)

²⁴ See the articles in the book cited in fn.23. See also Felix Wilfred: *Soziale Institution und Protestbewegungen in Indien*, in Johannes Hoffmann (ed.): *Die Vernunft in den Kulturen. Das Menschenrecht auf kultureigene Entwicklung*, Frankfurt a.M. 1993, pp. 223-245.

²⁵ Arvind Sharma: *Hinduism for Our Times*, Delhi 1996.

consequences was inevitable: Birth determined one's caste, and there was little chance to escape this fate. Objective circumstances made the concept of karma static.

Now, Sharma advocates making it dynamic: The possibility of social mobility, combined with sufficient effort, makes it possible to realize several 'lives' during one lifetime and therefore to escape the predetermined social status; that is to escape the lifelong caste restriction. Contrary to the inexorable constraints of the traditional static concept of karma, this dynamic concept emphasizes the free will. This means that the individual can overcome not only his or her status predetermined by birth, but also throughout life, through continuing activity and increasing competence, in order to continually overcome the level previously reached. According to this conception of Karma, in a socially mobile society rebirths happen *during the course of the same life*: so that karma, caste and the idea of the predestination of man by birth are detached, without needing to give up the idea of karma itself. "...I suggest that," Sharma writes, "for our times, we consider all the four varnas (castes, D.S.) as contained in all of us...: The idea is that *all* varnas are contained in *every* individual from now on instead of every individual being comprised within only one of the varnas."²⁶ This idea of "internalization of the four castes in every single individual" includes a fourfold obligation for every Hindu: As a Brahman every Hindu has to be, at least to some extent, familiar with the holy books and rites of Hinduism; as a *kshatriya* one is liable to military service and has to participate in the political process; as a *vaishya* one has to learn and carry on a profession; and as a *shudra* eventually one has to do some kind of manual work or service.

Sharma's considerations suggest a further reinterpretation. Beside caste system and predetermination of man by birth, a further characteristic of Hindu thought is the notion of so-called stages of life (*ashramas*). According to this notion, man should pass through four stages during his life: first the stage of a student, then that of the father of a family, of a hermit and of a wandering ascetic. Again Sharma's point is to make the basic idea dynamic. He proposes to relate the four *ashramas* to one day, i.e. to understand each day as a whole life: In the earliest morning, for example, one studies the holy books; in the morning and afternoon one earns his living; the evening is spent together with one's loved ones; at night one meditates in order to free oneself from the distractions of the day. In case this relation of the life stages to one single day seems too radical, they can also be related to one week or to another period of time. Sharma regards it as imperative that an originally static central concept of Hinduism—that of fixed stages during the life span—is, without giving up the basic intention, made dynamic through reinterpretation.

Particularly the first interpretation should deprive the conventional caste system of its foundation. Both interpretations are distinguished by taking a basic concerns of a particular philosophy of life seriously and therefore do not abandon it. The attempt may appear slightly artificial or (even) far-fetched. However, something which speaks for it is the fact that this kind of reinterpretation may prove to be more promising for the decoupling of Hinduism and the caste system than frontal attacks. If this is the case it will also be a more effective method of bringing about the reform of Hinduism (as it is currently practiced). Whether these ideas for reinterpretation will be able to provide the necessary impetus to reform, or whether they are too politically 'lightweight', only the future will show.

²⁶ See id., p. 46.

III

7. Some Untimely Reflections on the Dialogue between Christians and Muslims, or Pleading for a Reorientation of the Intercultural Dialogue

The following observations on the dialogue between Christians and Muslims, or between Western modernism and Islam, will probably appear untimely, in the sense of Friedrich Nietzsche, who first coined this term, "against the time and thus to the time and, hopefully, in favor of a coming time"¹. This reflection was first inspired by the observation that the marginal utility of the dialogue in question as it is to be observed in countries like Germany is declining. If, initially, that dialogue provided new information and stimulated new findings and insights, it has meanwhile become such a routine affair that both analytically and practically it is hardly possible to generate any new points of view.

Furthermore, a curious role game can be observed in the course of this dialogue. On the whole, the Muslim participants are not hard-boiled representatives of Orthodox Islam, be it in the traditionalist, Islamist, integrationalist or fundamentalist sense (all of which are often hard to differentiate). Believers or non-believers, they are as a rule representatives of a "modern Islam" (whatever that may mean in detail). Nevertheless-and it can only be explained in group-dynamic terms-it is precisely these "modernists" who in dialogues with Westerners get caught up in a position in which their philosophical arguments are roughly consistent with the same Islamist arguments which they would tend to resist in local political discussions, particularly since they themselves are often the target of Islamist propaganda.

The Western participants of the dialogue are not seldom characterized by their naive criticism of modernism, the uneasy product of which they see themselves. Their criticism is naive because they are often unaware-or do not want to become aware-of its implications. Thus, two "dialogue partners" come together, the one side-the Muslims-appealing for understanding for points of view which cannot be their own (if one reads their statements, they indeed are not their own), and the other side-the "good-willed Westerners"-with not much more to offer than self-accusations. A dialogue such as this, intellectually exhausted and at a dead-end, holds no promise for the future apart from its routine continuation and its repetitiveness.

Are there any ways out of this situation, and could the concentration on specific central themes help?

7.1 The Realistic Reconstruction by Westerners of Their Own Historical Development

In the usual dialogues between Christians and Muslims, or between Westerners and people from the Islam world (and from other cultures), there is a lack of feeling for the historical dimension of the development of the West. In actual fact, the history of the Western world is

¹ Friedrich Nietzsche: *Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben*, in: *Werke*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1963, vol. 1, p. 210.

only mentioned with reference to colonialism and imperialism-which they are, of course, fully justified to condemn. As a rule, however, the West is discussed as if the product of its development, "modernism", is the belated and conclusive result of an initial "modernism project". This "project" is implied to be authentically Western, as if its course was predestined by cultural genes or chromosomes, so to speak, and had gradually unfolded, accelerated by occasional genetic transitions (such as revolutions), but otherwise inevitable in its development. Discourse on some central aspects of the Western world, as Westerners themselves see it today-rationalism, secularism, individualization and so on-is to a great extent moulded by such assumptions as these.

In reality, all the essential characteristics of *today's* Western world are far more the product of highly contradictory and conflict-ridden development processes than a self-developed product predetermined by cultural genes. Not only were the paths of development within Europe very varied (with North-South and East-West divisions as well as many dividing lines within those regions); furthermore, within each single development path the historical outcome of each process was always dependent on factors which were by no means identical. The decisive factors were various configurations of political, social, economic and cultural groups and their corresponding intellectual currents.²

The development of Europe included-in some parts earlier than others-an historically unprecedented political, social, economic and cultural transformation. Traditional societies were modernized; illiterate societies with people living on the verge of subsistence became societies with competent, self-conscious urban populations who became aware of their new interests and identities and then became politically active and organized. This reconstruction was like a prolonged period of emancipation, which even in the West is still not concluded today.³ Above all, it was never an automatic process. Furthermore, the liberation of the people from their intellectual self-bondage only became relatively stable where there was reliable support from materially and/or institutionally secure groups.

This substantial history of European paths of development was shaped by power groups, each with varying degrees of effectiveness. The landed gentry, the peasantry, the Church and the monarchy set the stage initially; the bourgeoisie, the proletariat and the new middle class were relatively later products of the reconstruction process. Nothing was certain from the outset-neither basic liberties and human rights nor the constitutional state, neither democratization nor the emancipation of women, neither the orientation to rationalism nor the assumption that conflicts were legitimate and "only" needed constructive processing, and so on. It would also be wrong to assume that European development was equal to a triumphal march of the modernists and that the traditionalists had only ever been on the retreat, fighting battles which they had lost from the outset.

Some of what are regarded as western achievements are only fairly recent and some even very recent. In 1215, the year of the Magna Carta (a document fundamental to the

² Dieter Senghaas: *The European Experience*, Leamington Spa/Dover 1985. This book is now available in Arabic translation: Urubba: Durus Wa Namadhidsch, Damaskus (Sociological Studies Series, vol. 22) 1996.

³ On this topic see now Ulrich Beck et al.: *Reflexive Modernisierung. Eine Kontroverse*, Frankfurt a.M. 1996.

development of Europe), individual protective rights were established, but not in today's sense. It was rather a question of defending the ancient feudal rights of English barons against the arrogant power of one who had dared to establish himself as the supreme head of the state by military means.⁴ It took centuries and many changes before the constellation of that year-King John and the English barons, who felt their status threatened-was replaced by the line-up we know today-the constitutional state and citizens with legally guaranteed individual protective rights. The separation of State and Church familiar today was hardly derived from the biblical recommendation to "render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, to God the things that are God's." The secular state was by no means the inevitable result of European culture; on the contrary, this type of state had to be secured in the face of immense resistance, as is revealed for instance by the fact that the Lutheran Church only made peace with the secular state after World War II, and the Catholic Church did not do so until after the second Vatican Council in the 1960s.⁵ The fact that women's emancipation was a late product and not an early phenomenon of modernism hardly needs pointing out, as it is made obvious by current discussions. There are a number of further examples of this kind.⁶

The point, then, is that the "development of Europe", "modernism", or simply "the West" must be thought of in its real historical context, that is, in the context of far-reaching conflicts between existing and newly developing power groups, of progressive and reactionary developments, but also of many unavoidable compromises between collective actors who were not strong enough to gain hegemonial victories single-handedly. They therefore by necessity had to channel developments towards constitutional arrangements in the sense of checks and balances, i.e. power control and the distribution of force-*and in the majority of cases they did this reluctantly*, so to speak: *contre cœur*. While the intercultural dialogue today is emphatically marked by a kind of "profile essentialism"-in that the West is assumed to have certain distinctive inherent or "eternal" features-the rediscovery of the real history of modernism could be helpful to Westerners in adjusting their own image of the West. It could also help Western participants of intellectual debates with other cultures to avoid falling into the similar trap of making profile-essentialist projections.⁷ This trap is stumbled into in almost every intercultural dialogue.

A second recommendation may also be useful.

7.2 Calling for a Realistic Insiders' View of Islam

One of the fateful aspects of current Christian-Muslim dialogues is its fixation on "Islamic Fundamentalism". It is remarkable that almost without exception the term "Islamic Fundamentalism" is strongly criticized, but that the dialogues are nevertheless saturated by

⁴ S.G.R.C. Davis: *Magna Carta*, London 1992⁷.

⁵ On this topic see most recently Hans Maier: *Wie universal sind die Menschenrechte?*, Freiburg 1997.

⁶ For example, within the Western world before World War I there existed only three countries with unlimited universal suffrage, and suffrage for women has been basically an achievement of this century!

⁷ See Hella Mandt: *Die offene Gesellschaft und die Wurzeln des zeitgenössischen Fundamentalismus*, in: *Staatswissenschaften und Staatspraxis*, vol. 4, no. 2, 1993, pp. 175-196.

this terminology. Evidently neither the term nor the phenomenon itself can be avoided. Criticism of the term, however, often also leads to the denial of its actual existence, or it is simply retermed as "Islamism" or "Integrism".

Regardless of the terminology, the debate itself remains utterly fragmentary. This can be illustrated by the simple fact that the very people who most strongly criticize the term "fundamentalism" and regard it as the source of a new enemy image have as yet done nothing towards documenting the whole spectrum of thought in the Islamic world.⁸ Why is one conference held after the other-with the best of intentions-on the issue of "fundamentalism" (and always with a similar criticism of the concept), and why no dialogue with the representatives of a modern, democratic form of Islam on their own visions?

These representatives of modern Islam see themselves faced with a reality which traditionalists and fundamentalists are evading in their own specific ways. Islamic societies are also in a dramatic process of reconstruction-a social change sweeping across all fields of society, economy and culture. New social classes are forming; society and the economy are becoming more differentiated; the level of competence of the population is increasing. This growing social, economic and cultural complexity raises the question how the vast diversity of interests and identities arising out of it can be handled politically.⁹ Traditionalists have one or another variation on the old order in mind, thereby living under the illusionary assumption that the political order of the *ancien regime* could even survive the circumstances of a changing society. Fundamentalists (which do exist, regardless of whether the term is appropriate or not) use the social illnesses resulting from the modernization process as a justification for their Machiavellian strategy to seize power. Their response to growing complexity is-as is generally typical for fundamentalists-relatively simple: to overcome it by the one or other variant of despotic and totalitarian reduction of complexity.¹⁰

It goes without saying that such tactics are being discussed within Islamic societies, and political struggles for and against them are in progress. A conflict such as this is-as was no different in Europe in the past-part of the transition process. But this is no reason for carrying out a distorted or a pseudo-dialogue about it.

An intellectual debate should rather be dealing intensively with the concepts of the democratic representatives of the Islamic world; not because it is presumed that they are the "better Muslims", but primarily out of simple curiosity. How do writers, scientists, politicians, the representatives of social and especially religious groups envisage a desirable political constitution for their increasingly complex societies? It is clear that ancient texts can offer no inspiration, not even the Koran. Like all comparable texts, the Koran too (and subsequent texts based on it) was tied into the context of traditional society. Whatever ideas existed about order in this type of society, they can only be unrealistic and too simple for a modern society or one in the process of modernization. In other words, ancient texts can still-perhaps especially today-inspire individuals to virtuous behavior, but cannot be used as a source for

⁸ In German publications there is one favorable exception to be mentioned here Andreas Meier: *Der politische Auftrag des Islam. Programme und Kritik zwischen Fundamentalismus und Reformen. Originalstimmen aus der islamischen Welt*, Wuppertal 1994.

⁹ This is the basic issue to which my most recent book is addressing itself. Dieter Senghaas: *Zivilisierung wider Willen. Der Konflikt der Kulturen mit sich selbst*, Frankfurt a.M. 1998.

¹⁰ Bassam Tibi: *Der religiöse Fundamentalismus im Übergang zum 21. Jahrhundert*, Mannheim 1995.

drafting an ideal or viable, modern social or economic system. As it is, a modern social order cannot be intrinsically virtuous. Should one want to make it virtuous, then one would be pleading for despotism-even if it were in the name of a republic of virtues.

It is therefore extremely fascinating to enquire what constructive ideas are being considered in other cultures such as the Islamic, on how to cope with this objective complexity of problems. It has already been explained that Europe needed centuries to come to terms with it in its own way. As a rule, people from the Islamic world who are abreast with current social developments and racking their brains over the question are not likely to dispose of clear-cut solutions. However, their thoughts and proposals for a solution are of great significance to those directly experiencing the changes, as they offer desirable options which flow into the political debate. An appraisal of *forward-looking* thinking in the Islamic world (and elsewhere)- first by simply acknowledging its existence, making translations and organizing dialogues-is much more promising for the future than a continuation of distorted debates on fundamentalism.

In fact, in view of the situation explained at the beginning, the clear demand should even be to hold no more conferences on Islamic fundamentalism. Not because the phenomenon of political fundamentalism does not exist within the Islamic world (on the contrary!), but because this fixation leads the dialogue astray, forces the Islamic representatives, as we have seen, into difficult roles, and also because it gives rise here in the West to a curious picture of Islam: Fundamentalism is on the one hand often trivialized, on the other it is often overexaggerated, but endeavors towards modernizing Islam are completely overlooked. It is vitally important to hold discussions with theorists and political power groups who are struggling to establish future-orientated policies which do not insinuate or even stage-manage regressive solutions-vitally important for us, but also for the democratic Islamic representatives from the Islamic world. Redirecting the debate in this way also means avoiding the danger of unwittingly becoming the useful idiot of fundamentalists. What is more, conditions for a new dialogue are not unfavorable, as we shall see below.

Contrary to common assumptions, there is at present no potentially highly explosive line of conflict between the Islamic world and the West-neither the beginnings of one nor a developing one, not to mention a nascent phalangeal confrontation.¹¹ Of the conflicts that do exist, some are moderate, some are sporadic build-ups, and some really severe conflicts in Arabic-Islamic countries or within the Islamic world as a whole. These are in fact modernization conflicts, similar to those which took place in Europe from the 16th to the 20th century, albeit under different circumstances and with a different cultural profile. Within these current local conflicts, the Islamic-Christian component hardly plays more than a marginal role if one disregards the Coptic Christians in Egypt, the Sudan, the Lebanon and the Philippines (which is nevertheless over 90 percent Christian). As a rule, the conflicts are focused on political conflicts *within* the respective Islam community, which seldom functions like an "*umma*". In general, the conflicts between secular Western states and the Islamic minorities within Western societies have also remained marginal. So, as already stated, the starting position is quite favorable!

¹¹ Dieter Senghaas: *A Clash of Civilizations - An Idée fixe?*, in: *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 35, no. 1, 1998, pp. 127-132.

This basic situation, both here and in Islamic countries, must be emphasized because here in the West the theory of "the demonization of Islam" is gaining in popularity, and, moreover, is helping to renew the fixation on a supposed "Occident-Orient conflict". This is particularly often expressed by the very people who are endeavoring to promote a dialogue with Muslims. At the same time it is not seldom claimed that this new enemy image is a Machiavellian contrivance to replace the old concept of the communist enemy. The fact is overlooked that the demonization of communism has hardly held any sway since the 1960s, not even during the so-called "Second Cold War" in the late 70s and early 80s. That is why, when the East-West Conflict ended in 1989/90, there was neither among the elites nor among the masses any evidence that an enemy image had been lost. By then, the demonization of communism, dating from the fifties and sixties, had only marginal significance. There was therefore no demand for a substitute. The demonization of a new enemy side, i.e. substituting Islam for Communism, is to a large extent imagined. A realistic concept of Islam, however, cannot be formed if people here in the West see themselves confronted with a fantasized enemy image and not with the realities of Islam (or, to put it more correctly, the different forms of Islam).¹²

7.3 Looking Beyond the Christian-Muslim Dialogue

Nevertheless, the Christian-Muslim dialogue still urgently needs a broader horizon. The following four observations may be of use here.

Firstly, if Muslims around the world are threatened today, then it is not within the Islamic-Christian sphere, but in Hindu majority communities, i.e. in India. There, where Muslims represent a "minority" of 120 million people, many of the types of conflict are taking place which are abstractly imagined in Christian-Islamic regions. The extent of conflict there is of considerable significance, as it is possible that it could spread to epidemic proportions without any chance of escape. The conflict is already influencing local political contexts ("communalism"), and in parts escalating with deplorable intensity. All the essential elements of ethno-political conflict can be observed here. Both sides are disputing each other's right to exist, and the idealization of each group is followed by the declaration who is its enemy. The greater the extent of such psychodynamic demarcations, i.e. the more autistic the conflict becomes, the greater the endeavors of each side to symbolically redefine its collective identity, for instance by creating a myth about its origins and history.¹³ At the same time, the power strategists are using such ethno-political symbolizations to encourage ethno-political awareness even where it previously had not existed. "Imagined communities" turn into militarized conflict parties defining themselves in ethno-political terms.¹⁴

Attention should be drawn to the escalating conflict between Hindus and Muslims because it is a real and not an imagined one and it also has international implications with the threat of conventional and possibly even nuclear war between India and Pakistan. In addition, it is

¹² In that respect a German book edited by Gernot Rotter: *Die Welten des Islam. Neunundzwanzig Vorschläge, das Unvertraute zu verstehen*, Frankfurt a.M. 1993 is quite illuminating.

¹³ Ernst Pulsfort: *Was ist los in der indischen Welt? Das Drama auf dem indischen Subkontinent*, Freiburg 1993.

¹⁴ Thomas Meyer: *Identitäts-Wahn. Die Politisierung des kulturellen Unterschieds*, Berlin 1997.

worth pointing out that this is a clash between two very different cosmologies. The differences between Hinduism and Islam are far greater than those between Islam and Christianity. The conflict is also disastrous insofar as it is being borne out by grass-roots movements (as is the conflict between Hindus and Sikhs). Manipulators at the top would not have a chance without the astonishingly diverse response from below. And as Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs, but also the politically less influential Christians, Buddhists, Parses and Jainists have no alternative but to maintain their old forms of local coexistence or to find new ones, events in India are of the utmost exemplary significance. Up until now the secular state left behind by the old colonial power provided a framework within which this coexistence was organized. If this is questioned, what will replace it? A hegemonial solution ("Hindustan") would be catastrophic and would mean widescale civil war.¹⁵

Secondly, looking beyond the horizons of one's most immediate problems also means perceiving real lines of conflict where Muslims and Christians only play a marginal role, in other words where other communities are fighting each other. What is pushing them into these conflicts? The conflict which has escalated in Sri Lanka between Buddhist Sinhalese and Hindu Tamils could be cited as an example here. What can be learned from it?

Again, the initial circumstances of the conflict are comparable with those of other ethno-political conflicts. The astonishing fact here, though, is that the clash involves two parties both of whose cosmological backgrounds are based more emphatically than almost any other in the world on non-violence. In particular, a militant, political form of Buddhism must really appear to be a contradiction in terms. The conflict in Sri Lanka is therefore an example of the extent to which even cosmologies which originally embodied the precept of restraint in cases of conflict can be used as intellectual weapons. The causalities which in such cases are often lightly assumed must especially be reconsidered in the light of the Sri Lankan conflict. Did such conflicts begin as clashes between cosmologies, cultures and/or religions, in a sense rooted in the different sources and origins of the respective cultures? Or are they not rather a case of modern development conflicts with identifiable modern interest groups? These are, for instance, old elites being pushed aside (a modern phenomenon!); newly arising elites confronting the power assertions of the post-colonial elites who they regard as Westernized, corrupt state officials who have secured all the privileges for themselves; new professionals (often engineers and scientists) who find their access to elitist positions blocked and often act as the spearhead of fundamentalist movements; marginal groups in urban centres used as the sounding-boards of unsuccessful candidates for the elite classes, and so on.¹⁶

Thirdly, the variable meaning of cultural values in the development process also becomes clear if one takes a comparative look at Eastern Asia. This is a cultural region which in recent times can be regarded to a large degree as Europe's successor in economic and social, and meanwhile also in political terms. The reasons for this do not primarily lie in Confucianism, and certainly not in Neoconfucianism which is now nothing more than one of many intellectual trends. The real reason for this "succession" is that over the past few decades and for reasons which can all be named a successful economic modernization process has

¹⁵ Amartya Sen: *The Threats to Secular India*, in: *New York Review of Books*, April 8, 1993, pp. 26-32.

¹⁶ On this phenomenon see Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (eds.): *Fundamentalisms Observed*, Chicago 1991.

taken place in Eastern Asia which has since then led to a modern social structure.¹⁷ The complete range of aspects that generally make up such a structure can be seen more and more clearly in Eastern Asia: a quantitative reduction of the peasantry; an increase in private businesses uncoupling themselves from state administration but still remaining connected to it (the MITI Syndrome); a growing class of wage-earners whose political influence increases to the degree that demand for them exceeds supply; a striving middle class; an increasingly self-conscious intelligentsia. These social classes in Eastern Asia are today demanding, even fighting for their right to participate in making political opinions and decisions. And they are succeeding at a much faster rate than their European predecessors did because the momentum of the reconstruction process of these societies is much greater than that of the relatively drawn-out process in European societies, and because their political endeavors to gain powerful positions are backed by increasing economic weight.¹⁸

The pluralization of political systems which can be observed in Eastern Asia today, especially in Taiwan and South Korea, is thus a political reflection of the institutional adaptation of old autocratic and despotic regimes to an increasingly complex socio-economic and cultural reality.¹⁹ As in European history, this adaptation is no easy process, but heavily ridden with conflict. Here, too, its direction is not linear, but irregular, although its prospects are good because it was preceded by a regrouping of the old societies into strong new socio-economic groups. This basic fact of socio-economic restructuring is not affected by the present "Asian crisis".

At the same time, the current debate on so-called "Asian values" which can be followed in Eastern Asia, particularly in Singapore (South-East Asia), should not be misinterpreted. The "Asian values" proclaimed today are similar to the old European values of the past. Unity, harmony and consensus are preferred to pluralism; majority voting and the protection of minorities are declared alien; discipline is more highly rated than liberty, which is regarded as selfish; the group, in particular the family, is put in a higher category than the individual, duty higher than rights, authority or the rule of the wise men ("guruocracy") higher than parliamentarianism and constitutionalism. Power is restrained not by its distribution, but by ethical practices which in turn are sanctified by traditions and conventions. The good ruler at the state level is likened to a good family father. If he proves to be a tyrant, then resistance is conceivable and legitimate—at an abstract level, but only there. The political philosophy of "Asian values" places "stability first and democracy later!" This was also the philosophy of the early European rulers, and echoes of it can be perceived in Europe even today.

While such concepts, as already stated, are familiar to European history—and, in point of fact, completely concurrent with "Islamic values"—they have in Eastern Asia (and, meanwhile, in South-East Asia, too) a specific power-ideological function. They are the typical expression of a legitimization crisis of outdated authoritarian regimes in economically relatively successful countries. "Asian values" serve to ward off the political demands of the new social classes, especially the new middle class and the wage-earners. In China they have the additional

¹⁷ Ulrich Menzel: *In der Nachfolge Europas. Autozentrierte Entwicklung in den ostasiatischen Schwellenländern Südkorea und Taiwan*, München 1985.

¹⁸ Ulrich Menzel and Dieter Senghaas: *Europas Entwicklung und die Dritte Welt. Eine Bestandsaufnahme*, Frankfurt a.M. 1986, part II.

¹⁹ Dieter Senghaas: *On Asian and Other Values*, in: Kim Dae-jung Peace Foundation (ed.): *Democratization and Regional Cooperation in Asia*, Seoul 1996, pp. 67-81.

function of justifying the continued existence of the Communist Party's monopoly rights. "Asian values" are thus an expression of neo-authoritarianism, promulgated when the outdated authoritarianism of the autocratic regime, i.e. the development dictatorships, is called into question by society.²⁰

However, although "Asian values" are propagated, they are also a sign of retreat. They serve as the ideological spearhead against demands for further democratization from new social groups who also want an active role in political development. In all probability, these values will have no future in Eastern Asia because, in contrast to Third World countries, the demands of a growing number of upwardly mobile social groups are based on a differentiating economy. The new demands are therefore not formulated in the abstract context of basic liberties or simply human rights, but are bolstered by economic and social conditions.

Fourthly, the process in Eastern Asia is interesting because it contrasts strikingly with the history of Realsozialismus, or "really existing socialism". Really existing socialism was also a development programme with autocratic devices. The concentration of power, the monopoly rights of one party, the gleichschaltung of society, economy and culture were not interpreted as the expression of totalitarianism, but the epitome of progressive development policy in the construction of socialist societies. The aim was to produce "Socialist Man", or, still better, "Soviet Man". "Republik, das ist nicht viel, Sozialismus ist das Ziel" (A republic alone is not enough; the real aim is socialism), was an old slogan even within socialist movements in the West.

Why did really existing socialism fail, and why is Eastern Asia so successful? There are many reasons, but in the context of this discussion there is one of decisive interest. In terms of social statistics, really existing socialism undoubtedly led to the modernization of societies: The illiterate learned to read and write, peasants became urbanites with new and varied professions; upward social mobility was possible everywhere. However, the rulers of really existing socialism were under the illusion that upwardly mobile, intelligent and competent people could still be treated like children. The discrepancy between professional competency and political infantilization, aggravated by the dramatic consequences of economic mismanagement, was overcome by repression for a long time. However, as had been predicted at an early stage, in the absence of structural reforms it inevitably led to revolutionary transformations, which might even have resulted in a short-lived victory for the counterrevolution.²¹

The whole course of events is instructive for the dialogue discussed here. Firstly, it contrasts strikingly with developments in Eastern Asia. But the similarity of some variants of Islamic fundamentalism to the ideology of really existing socialism are also obvious, for instance in its high regard for the concentration of power, the concept of an homogeneous moral community as the fundamental principle in politics, society, economy and culture, and the proposition that not the reprehensible bourgeois values of the West but their own, "authentic" values should be achieved. Unfortunately, even the now bygone discussion on bourgeois

²⁰ On China see Dieter Senghaas: *Wie geht es mit China weiter?*, in: *Leviathan*, vol. 24, no. 1, 1996, pp. 78-92.

²¹ Dieter Senghaas: op. cit. (fn. 2), ch. 6.

Western human rights versus socialist human rights is being repeated, except that now "Islamic" or, particularly in China, "Asian" human rights have taken the place of "socialist human rights". However, while socialist human rights were originally proclaimed to maintain the control of already gained power positions and to ward off the claims to power of new social groups and in particular a pluralistic democratization process, "Islamic values" are as a rule propagated for the purpose of gaining power. Once gained, these values would be functionalized by power to the same purpose as they were under really existing socialism-they would be transformed into a power ideology.

To sum up, one can see that for various reasons it would be useful to look beyond the horizon of current Christian-Muslim dialogues. One could learn that the real threats to Muslims lie somewhere other than in their relations to the West, and above all in their own societies and in Hindu regions of India. One could also see that exactly the same conflicts in which Muslim societies are struggling and suffering today are also taking place in non-Islamic regions, and even in places where non-violence (in principle) is part of the traditional cultural message. What unites the Islamic societies and these societies is the breakdown in their post-colonial development, in other words, a development crisis. In Eastern Asia, where the crisis could be averted as a result of cleverly managed development policy, there are in consequence no signs of phenomena such as fundamentalism. Rather, what one sees is a drive towards socio-economic modernization followed by a thrust towards political modernization in the shape of democratization and the establishment of constitutional states. Muslims who regard "the West" as "rotten" could learn a lot from this process, and even historically unaware Westerners could discover in it aspects which roughly compare with their own history. Unfortunately, in the course of its development, really existing socialism missed the chance of political modernization and collapsed as a result. This is no trivial experience, either!

Lessons and more lessons. These and others have not yet been considered in the dialogue under discussion here, and they could be so useful, especially in view of the following final remarks.

7.4 The Message of Modernism-a Proposal

The term modernism can evoke many associations: Scientification, technology, rationalism, individualization and so on. If one wishes, one can also associate the complete range of social diseases and pathologies with the term, as happens in most Christian-Muslim dialogues-alienation, loss of collective moral standards, sexual permissiveness and lasciviousness, postmodern "anything goes", crime and so on. The extreme of criticism and self-accusations is the theory of modernity as "modern fundamentalism".²²

The latter theory, in particular, misjudges the fact that modernism always evolved from criticism and self-criticism. Seen as a whole (and not just selectively), modernism in its tendency can be compared to an anti-fundamentalist programme. It began with criticism of the feudal order, and in the past few decades it has arrived at the last variant of self-

²² A controversy in that respect can be found in Sybille Fritsch-Oppermann (ed.): *Fundamentalismus der Moderne? Christen und Muslime im Dialog*, Loccum 1996.

criticism-post-modernism, which, however, would be misunderstood if it wasn't attributed to modernism itself.²³ In the centuries in-between events gave rise to a wave-like pattern of developments. The Enlightenment provoked Romanticism, Impressionism prompted Expressionism, individualism gave rise to communitarian countermovements, capitalism led to socialism, the Liberalistic constitutional state gave way to the constitutional welfare-state. And modernism was never satisfied with itself, beginning exclusively and with a restricted scope, then gradually broadening out and becoming more and more comprehensive. While it originally involved a few members of the educated and the propertied classes, "the people" only became the upholders and beneficiaries of modernism as a result of a continuous process of modernization. Only very recently was modernism correctly, if a little belatedly, revealed by feminists to be an all-male event, with the consequence that even with regard to gender relations, modernism is now gradually becoming more inclusive. The diversity of modernism is its very attractiveness-its movements, countermovements and its radiation.

There is one little-regarded consequence of these facts. Because modernism is in many ways equal to an emancipation process, the growing plurality of identities and interests, of self-images and world views has always been its inevitable result. However, where social mobility and political awareness and involvement are allowed, and where plurality is no longer a novel, elitist phenomenon but has turned into a mass phenomenon of divided and riven societies, one is forced to consider the question of coexistence. How is it possible, under such circumstances, to establish modalities for the constructive management of conflict which, despite the existing plurality, allow reliable, non-violent agreements in the public arena? Because in borderline cases, unhindered pluralism without institutional safeguards, i.e. without a recognized and accepted legal framework, can mean civil war.²⁴

Although unintentional for a long time, European modernism was like an incessant struggle over the normative, procedural, material and psychological preconditions for successful coexistence. It is a history of many failures, but at the same time also the history of the democratic constitutional state which was never and nowhere linear in its development and was never an automatic process with a fixed purpose. In this process political innovations occurred, like for example institutionally secured protective rights and basic individual liberties, the division of power, a public order based on political pluralism and so on. None of these experiences can be handed on easily or even through missionizing to the rest of the world. But they remain an available asset.

For the problems of coexistence are also arising in the rest of the world at an increasing rate and often in a much more potentially explosive combination than in the past in Europe. The growing numbers of civil wars prove this fact. No society in the world in the throes of modernization can evade the question of coexistence. The assumption of homogeneous collectives, as in the case of the "*umma*" or other similar concepts, is a misjudgement or suppression of the problem and heavily burdens the task of overcoming it. Furthermore, in many parts of the world politicization is intensifying without the corresponding institutional mechanisms to cushion its effects. And in many other parts of the world, unfortunately, the

²³ Wolfgang Ivers: *Unsere postmoderne Moderne*, Berlin 1993⁴.

²⁴ On this problem see the contributions in Dieter Senghaas (ed.): *Den Frieden denken. Si vis pacem, para pacem*, Frankfurt a.M. 1995.

material basis which has always been necessary for such mechanisms is shrinking. The potential for political conflict is therefore highly explosive, and the temptation in such circumstances to evade the problem by simple, fundamentalistic means such as despotism or dictatorship is great. Europe has experienced much suffering in this respect in the past, and a lot of useful lessons could be learned from that experience, too.